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REVEREND PIERRE GIBALT AND THE OLD NORTHWEST

by

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Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Loyola University
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ments for the Degree of Master of Arts

Chicago, Illinois

July, 1936



FATHER PIERRE GIBAULT

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PREFACE

Until recently the relative value or importance of the battles of Vincennes, Fallen Timbers, Tippecanoe, and others fought in the region that subsequently came to be known as the Old Northwest, has scarcely been recognized. But the pages of Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary history are being re-written. These campaigns west of the Alleghenies are assuming their right proportions. The true picture of the events of that time shows how important the outcome here was in our national development.

Our people, for reasons difficult to understand, neglected for more than a century any real recognition of the services of one who was the chief agent in bringing about the surrender of Vincennes to the Americans. This character is the Canadian patriot-priest, the Reverend Pierre Gibault. His services to our country were not only in the aid given to Clark, but also in the long life of arduous labor for the welfare of the people.

The purpose of this treatise is to acquaint the reader with the true facts of the conquest of this territory, especially of the capture of Vincennes on February 25, 1779, which is one of the most dramatic episodes in American history. The facts presented in the following pages prove that Father Gibault played the leading and controlling part in these grand enterprises,

for which we must ever hold him in grateful memory.

The writer is grateful to all those whose assistance has helped him in gathering material for this work. He acknowledges his debt to Mr. and Mrs. B. Schulte, of St. Louis, who so obligingly motored him to various places of historical interest, making it possible to gather documentary material; to Mrs. L. Schultheis, of Vincennes, who so kindly guided him along the route followed by Clark, from the Wabash River opposite St. Francisville, Illinois to Vincennes, a tour that conveyed much of the atmosphere of the thrilling episode; and to Reverend Father Gregoire, the present pastor of Vincennes, who so willingly permitted him to consult the archives of the Old Cathedral. Special thanks are likewise due to his teacher and adviser, Dr. Paul Kiniery, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, for his many valuable suggestions and his kindly interest in the production of this work.

CHAPTER I

FATHER GIBAULT, THE MISSIONARY

Before Father Pierre Gibault made his appearance in the Old Northwest, the Reverend Sebastian L. Meurin, of the Society of Jesus, was the only missionary priest tending to the spiritual wants of the people along the banks of the Mississippi River.¹ His residence was at the wooden church of Ste. Genevieve, in Missouri, about fifty miles south of St. Louis, and his visits across the river were as frequent as possible;² but they did not extend to Vincennes, on the Wabash, where Stephen Phillibert, a layman, gave private baptism to newborn children, and kept a register of these baptisms and of burials.³ In a letter to Bishop Briand of Quebec in 1767, Father Meurin mentioned that "this Illinois country consists of only six villages, each of about fifty or sixty fires, not including a considerable number of slaves. These villages, on account of their distance and situation, would each require a priest....There are

1 Jacob Piatt Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest." Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society. Publication No. 10. Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, 1906, 23.

2 John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Church in the United States (1763-1815). D.H. McBride & Co., Akron, O., 1888, II, 115.

3 Ibid., 117.

still many families here, in which religion prevails, and who justly fear that it will die out with them. They join me in beseeching you to take compassion on their children, and to send them at least two or three priests, if your Lordship cannot send four or five, who would be necessary, one of them with the title of Vicar-General of your Lordship....The post of Vincennes on the Wabash...is as large as our best village here, and needs a missionary even more...."⁴ In a second letter, dated May 9, 1767, Father Meurin wrote:

I am only sixty-one years old, but I am exhausted, broken down by twenty-five years' mission work in this country, and of these nearly twenty years of malady and disease show me the gates of death. I am incapable of long application or of bodily fatigue. I cannot therefore supply the spiritual necessities of this country, where the stoutest man could not long suffice, especially as the country is intersected by a very rapid and dangerous river. It would need four priests. If you can give only one, he should be appointed for Kaokia.⁵

The good priest wrote this letter at Cahokia, where he had been for three days, but was compelled to leave three-fourths of the work undone and to return to Ste. Genevieve to attend a man dangerously sick.⁶

Bishop Briand wrote to Father Meurin on August 7, 1767,

⁴ Shea, 117.

⁵ Ibid., 119.

⁶ Ibid., 119.

and cheered him by the promise that two priests should be sent
 to the Illinois country in the spring.⁷

The first priest sent to assist Father Meurin was the
 Reverend Pierre Gibault.⁸ He was of an old Canadian family. His
 father and his grandfather, both of whome bore the same name of
 Pierre Gibault, were natives of Canada. He, the eldest son, was
 christened on April 7, 1737, at Montreal. He was educated at
 the Seminary of Quebec and was ordained at Quebec on March 19,
 1768. He served for a short time in the Cathedral at Quebec,
 then set out for the Illinois country.⁹ He was sent to this
 region with the consent and upon the request of General Gage and
 the English authorities.¹⁰ His passport to come to the Illinois
 country as chaplain, under the English regime, to the French of
 Illinois, reads as follows:

By the Hon. Guy Carleton, Lieutenant
 Governor and commander in chief of the
 Province of Quebec, Brigadier General
 Commanding His Majesty's Forces in the
 Northern District.
 The commander in chief of His Majesty's
 Forces in North America having been
 pleased to approve of a Priest from this

7 Ibid., 120.

8 Shea, 124.

9 J.P. Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the
 Northwest," 23.

10 Joseph J. Thompson, "Illinois' First Citizen--Pierre
 Gibault," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, I, July, 1918,
 The Catholic Historical Society, Chicago, Ill., 1918, 79.

Province repairing to the Illinois for the comfort and satisfaction of the King's Roman Catholic subjects in these parts, who, it is hoped, will entertain a due sense of the care (he) sheweth for their interests.

These were therefore to permit the Rev. Pierre Gibault a missionary priest, who has taken the oath of allegiance to His Majesty, together with Marie Gibault his Mother and Louise Gibault his sister, to pass from hence to the Illinois by way of Michilimackinac in a canoe with the baggage to them belonging; without hinderance or molestation; in which all officers commanding at the several Forts and Posts, within the Northern district, are required, as those without said district are desired to be aiding and assisting to him, in forwarding him to his aforementioned destination, He as well as the people with him, behaving as becometh.

Given under our hand and seal At
Montreal this 1st Day of June 1768 By
the Brig. Gen'l's command.

Guy Carleton,
H.T.Cramahé.¹¹

We see from the above document that Father Gibault was permitted to go to the Illinois country with his mother and his sister, by way of Michilimackinac with his baggage. His baggage consisted of one bale, four kegs of brandy, and four of wine. His canoe-men were, Jacques Perrein, Pointe Claire, Jean B. Salle of Longveil, Francois La Marche of Longveil, Jean B. Dubue of Montreal, Pierre La Chapelle, also of Montreal, and Michael La Voix of Chambley. The passengers who traveled with him in

11 MS. at the Chicago Historical Society.

the canoe were, Francois Loillet of La Vallerie and Francois¹²
Beaugie of Beaufort.

It was immediately after his ordination that he set out for the Illinois country, where he was destined to spend the remainder of his life in the arduous work of a missionary priest in a wild and sparsely settled country, partly surrounded by savage and uncivilized races, and where he was also destined to acquire and exert a controlling influence over the people, and to determine in a great measure the political destiny of that vast region of country.

Before he reached the heart of his extensive charge, he¹³ was destined at Michilimackinac, now Mackinaw, in July, 1768. Here he immediately commenced his missionary work with the zeal and energy that he displayed through his entire career. This mission had been without a priest for several years; hence the devotion of the people was very weak. But Father Gibault, in a very short time, revolutionized, as it were, church matters. He devoted all his time during his stay here in reviving faith, hearing confessions, instructing young and old, administering the sacraments of the church, baptizing children and solemnizing marriage. The Indian converts of past years and all the Canadian settlers were rejoiced at his presence, and almost the

¹² Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1908, II, 298.

¹³ Dunn, op. cit., 23.

entire population of the mission received Communion during his
¹⁴ stay. He addressed a letter to Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand,
 dated July 28, 1768, informing him of his great success at this
 mission.

...upon my arrival at this post, after
 dining with the commandant, I went to
 the confessional and did not come out
 of it until after ten o'clock, and yet
 that is the only day I left it even as
 early as that. I also had to confer
 baptism, but there was only one cere-
 mony. My regret is that I am unable
 to remain long enough to gratify a vast
 number of voyageurs who, they tell me,
 wanted to make their confession, some
 of them not having been to the sacra-
 ment for three, some not for ten years.
 They tried in every possible way to
 keep me,But as I had no orders
 from you, my lord, except for the Illi-
 nois, I fear that something might go
 wrong there through my fault. In a
 word, God is not yet utterly abandoned
 in these places; He needs only resolute
 laborers willing to endure hunger and
 thirst and to keep a continual lent.

Gibault¹⁵

In the meantime Bishop Briand informed Father Meurin of the
 young priest's splendid work at Michilimackinac and stated that

14 Joseph J. Thompson, "Letters and Documents", Illinois
 Catholic Historical Review, January 1922, IV, 287.

15 Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of
 Philadelphia, pub. by the Society, XX, 1909, 406.

stated that Father Gibault "seems to be possessed of the qualities and disposition necessary for success". In the same letter, the Bishop continues: "...I have given Father Gibault powers which are inferior to yours. He is a young priest, and I beg you before God to watch over him, observe his conduct, and let me know whether he deserves my confidence. He has made the best of promises to me, and I love him dearly...."¹⁶

After having aroused the faithful at Michilimackinac, he continued his journey southward. When he arrived at Cahokia, for which mission he seems to have been intended, he found the old mission property, church, residence, barns, orchards, in short everything, rapidly going to ruin and the outlook for the future gloomy. Father Meurin was at Kaskaskia, some forty-five miles south of Cahokia and a place far better provided with means for carrying on missionary operations. On the arrival of Father Pierre Gibault the aged Jesuit without any hesitation surrendered his comparatively comfortable home at Kaskaskia to the new missionary and retired to Cahokia where he was received with the greatest affection by the French settlers.¹⁷

Father Gibault arrived at Kaskaskia in the fall of 1768. His first official entry on the records of the church of the Immaculate Conception at that place is the baptism of a child

16 Charles H. Metzger, S.J., "Sebastian Louis Meurin, S.J.," Ill. Cath. Hist. Review, IV, 1921, 46.

17 Dunn, 23.

on September 8, 1768. He signs this record "P. Gibault, parish priest of Kaskaskia." His bold signature, with its unique flourish, greets us through these records for fifteen years or
18
more.

But even Kaskaskia was no bed of roses for Father Gibault. We must here recall the fact, that only some five or six years before, in 1763, as the result of the Seven Years' War, Canada and the northern French possessions, which included the Illinois country, had been turned over by France to England. This change of government, always the source of disorder even in civilized countries, produced even greater disorganization in these distant outposts of civilization. The task of controlling these unruly frontiersmen and inducing them to fulfil their religious duties was a source of constant labor and worry. Kaskaskia had at this time almost two thousand inhabitants. Father Gibault could not find ten who had been to their religious duties for the last four or five years. But Father Gibault did not shrink
19
from the task of reforming Kaskaskia.

The young Canadian priest entered on his duties with zeal and energy, but was soon prostrated by the Western fever, violent at first, then slow and enervating, but he rallied, and

- 18 Edward Gay Mason, Illinois in the 18th Century. Kaskaskia and its Parish Records, Chicago Historical Society, Fergus Hist. Series, No. 12, Chicago, 1879, 177; also in Magazine of American History, VI, pub. by Chicago Hist. Soc., 1881.
- 19 Thompson, ICHR, II, 1919, 87.

went on bravely with the work before him, the magnitude of which became daily more appalling. Here at Kaskaskia by having prayers every night in the church, and by catechetical instructions four times every week, he revived faith and devotion.²⁰ Moreover, he preached as often as he could on Sundays and holydays. This required considerable brains, great zeal, and a fund of personal piety and self-sacrifice. For, besides the fifty-two Sundays of the year, the holydays of obligation in Canada were very numerous. By the official act of Bishop Laval, the first Bishop of Quebec, in 1694, the same holydays were made obligatory in all the French settlements in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana and the country west of the Mississippi until that territory, passing under Spanish domination, was, about 1776, reclaimed as part originally of the diocese of Santiago de Cuba, in virtue of De Soto's exploration of the Mississippi. These holydays were those of the reformed calendar of Urban VIII, and included The Feast of the Circumcision, January 1; The Epiphany, January 12; Candlemas Day, February 2; The Feasts of St. Mathias, February 24; of St. Joseph, March 19; of the Annunciation, March 25; of St. Michael, May 8; of St. John the Baptist, June 24; of St. Bartholomew, August 24; of St. Louis, August 26; of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September

20 Charles George Herbermann, "Very Reverend Pierre Gibault, V.G.", Historical Records and Studies, United States Hist. Society, N.Y., 1913, VI, part II, 132.

8; of St. Mathew, September 24; of SS. Simon and Jude, October 28; of All Saints, November 1; of St. Andrew, November 30; of St. Francis Xavier, December 3; of the Immaculate Conception, December 8; of St. Thomas, December 21; of St. Stephen, December 26; of St. John the Evangelist, December 28; besides Christmas Day, Easter Monday and Tuesday, Ascension Day, Whitsun Monday and Tuesday, Corpus Christi, the titular Saint of the Cathedral of Quebec, and the Patronal Feast of the Parish of Kaskaskia.²¹

His flock included, besides the French Creoles, a part of the soldiers of a detachment of the eighteenth (Royal Irish) regiment and most of the neighboring Indians, who had been converted by the Jesuit Fathers. It is needless to say that parishioners made up of such elements were the cause of much trouble, anxiety, and labor to the young priest, but he soon gained their good will by his attention to his duties, his frequent instruction to the young, whom he even taught to read and write, and by his regular preaching. That he did his work well, the result amply declares. For by Easter, 1769, he brought²² nearly all the Kaskaskians to their duties. In a letter dated February 15, 1769, Father Gibault gave his Bishop the following information:

...I employ my talents for the glory of
God, for my own sanctification and for

21 Joseph J. Thompson, ICHR, II, July 1919, 88.

22 Herbermann, op. cit., 132.

that of my neighbor as much, it seems to me, as I ought to do. I trust that our Lord will consider more what I wish to do and the intention with which I do it, that what I accomplish. As for the needs and exigencies of the different posts in this country, I am nearly certain that if your lordship could see them for himself you would not hesitate one moment to provide for them. Two more missionaries are still needed, one for the Tamaoris (Indians near Cahokia) ..., and the other for Post Vincennes.... 23

Gibault

Father Gibault, however, did not confine his attention to the faithful of Kaskaskia; he was constantly traveling from place to place. He attended to the spiritual wants of the Missouri settlements, and in 1769 blessed the little wooden chapel which the settlers had erected at Paincourt, our modern²⁴ St. Louis. In the same year, evidently at the instance of Father Meurin, and to give that missionary greater authority, the Bishop of Quebec had made the Reverend Pierre Gibault his²⁵ Vicar-General.

His powers of Vicar-General extended, like those of Father Meurin, from Mackinac on the north to New Orleans and Mobile on the south, and while his active ministrations did not, as far as we can gather, reach Mobile or New Orleans, they embraced all the old French forts and Indian missions, on the St. Joseph, in

23 Joseph J. Thompson, ICHR, IV, January 1922, 200.

24 Dunn, op. cit., 24.

25 Shea, op. cit., 127.

the vicinity of South Bend; Fort St. Louis and Fort Creve Coeur, on the Illinois river; Quiatenon and Fort Vincennes, on the Wabash; Post Arkanca, on the Arkansas; Fort Chartres, on the Mississippi; Ste. Genevieve, St. Louis, La Salinas, Old Mines, Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, St. Philip, Cahokia, and all the Christian Indian camps that spread over Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky. All this empire of then practically savage people he traveled time and time alone, now afoot, now in a cart, but ordinarily in canoes or a horseback, with the utensils of his sacred ministry in saddle pouches behind him, and his gun across the saddle-bow, and a belt about his waist, with pistols and bowie-knife. For the frontier priest went armed. He lived on game, and, moreover, he might, at any moment, be called upon to defend himself against some wild beast, and always to protect himself against the otherwise unawed Indian thieves and murderers, as well as against the white ruffians who then infested our Western frontier.

Vincennes on the Wabash, although a place of some eighty or ninety families, had not seen a priest since their pastor, Father Duvernay, was carried to New Orleans in 1763; as a natural

26 J.J. Conway, S.J., "The Beginnings of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, 1764-1776." Missouri Historical Society, No. 14, Mo. Hist. Soc., 1897, 27, 28.

27 The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, LXX, "All Missions 1747-1764", ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, The Burrows Bros. Co., Cleveland, O., 281.

consequence of this condition, vice and ignorance were becoming
dominant; yet the people earnestly solicited a priest. ²⁸

It was not until the early part of February, in 1770, that
Father Gibault reached Vincennes, and then through peril; for
hostile Indians beset the settlements, and twenty-two of the
people had fallen victims to them since he reached the country. ²⁹
He arrived at the Post in safety, and in a letter to Bishop
Briand dated June 15, 1770, after deploring the vices and dis-
orders that prevailed there, he says: "However, on my arrival,
all crowded down to the banks of the River Wabash to receive me;
some fell on their knees, unable to speak; others could speak
only in sobs; some cried out: 'Father, save us, we are almost
in hell'; others said: 'God has not then yet abandoned us, for
He has sent you to us to make us do penance for our sins....'" ³⁰

For two months Father Gibault remained at Vincennes, and
not only revived the faith of the Catholics, but also brought
into the fold a Presbyterian family which had settled there. ³¹
Animated by his zeal, the people began to rebuild the church,
which he made a very neat wooden structure of considerable
height. The somewhat more substantial church which followed
some fifteen years later was also erected through the efforts of

28 Shea, op. cit., 127.

29 James M. Graham, "Catholic Heroes of Illinois", ICHR,
January, 1919, 298.

30 Shea, 128.

31 Ibid.

Father Gibault.

On his return to Kaskaskia, he visited the newly arrived Spanish Commandant at Ste. Genevieve, and Lieutenant-Governor Don Pedro de Piernas, in St. Louis. The Spaniards came to these posts unattended by clergymen. Father Gibault continued, therefore, to visit Ste. Genevieve and promised de Piernas to include
33
St. Louis in his missions. He attended to the spiritual wants of the Catholics here until 1772, when Father Dagobert, Superior of the Capuchins, at New Orleans, sent Father Valentine as parish priest to St. Louis, and, in the next year, Father Hilary to Ste. Genevieve. This left Father Gibault free to devote his time to the country east of the river, but that occupied him fully, for
34
Father Meurin was old and feeble.

In a little more than six years from his arrival in September, 1768, he had worked over the entire field and infused new spiritual life and energy in all the missions. The testimony of Father Meurin evidenced not only Gibault's ability but represented him to have been a man of unusual worth. Young as Gibault was in the priesthood, his fidelity was praiseworthy. "I would consider myself fortunate", Meurin wrote to Bishop Briand, June
35
11, 1770, "if at his age I had his virtues and merits." He was

32 Clarence Walworth Alvord, "Kaskaskia Records 1778-1790", in Illinois Historical Collections, V, pub. by the Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, 1909, 537.

33 Louis Houck, op. cit., 299.

34 Dunn, op. cit., 24.

35 Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., Chapters in Frontier History, The Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, 1934, 13.

incessantly on the alert, seldom sleeping in his own home and often saying his breviary in the glaring sun or by the side of a smoking campfire.³⁶ On June 20, 1772, he wrote to Bishop Briand:

...I have nothing new to tell you except that we are always exposed, and now more than ever, to the danger of being massacred by the Indians of the low countries of the Mississippi, upon which our village borders (a danger) from which the other villages are exempt...Three times I have been taken by the savages; each time they let me go but forbade me to tell anybody about it. I obeyed them because if it were known I should never again be allowed to go about, and because, if the Indians were discovered through me, and I were ever recaptured, I should never be set free. I have adopted the plan of carrying no fire arms, for fear of being tempted to use them and thus having myself killed, or of inspiring them with the fear of being killed and that they would anticipate me instead of making me prisoner....³⁷

He was now worn out, exhausted and needed rest. In the spring of 1775, to obtain necessary relaxation, he visited Canada.³⁸

On his route he paid a short visit to Vincennes, and tarried among the Indian camps on the Wabash, the Peoria, and St. Joseph rivers.³⁹

His vacation was of short duration. His mind and heart were set upon work, and ease and comfort afforded him no pleasure. In the fall of the same year he started on his return to

³⁶ Herbermann, op. cit., 132.

³⁷ J.J.Thompson, "Letters and Documents", ICHR, IV, 1921, 206.

³⁸ Houck, II, 299.

³⁹ Thompson, ICHR, II, July 1919, 89.

the Northwest. He arrived at Michilimackinac in November where he was delayed by rains and inclement weather. Without finding opportunity to reach the Illinois, he went to Detroit, making the journey in a canoe, with great peril and suffering. He wrote from Detroit on December 4 to Bishop Briand: "The suffering I have undergone between Michilimackinac and this place has so deadened my faculties that I only half feel my chagrin at being unable to proceed to the Illinois. I shall do my best not to be useless at Detroit, and to relieve the two venerable old ⁴⁰ priests who attend it.

In the spring of 1776 he returned to his residence at Kaskaskia and resumed his missionary labors as before, visiting in ⁴¹ turn all the various missions in his territory. On February 23, 1777, he buried old Father Meurin in St. Joseph's church at Prairie du Rocher, and remained, himself, from that time until 1788 the only member of his calling within the broad domain of ⁴² the Illinois missions.

40 Dunn, 25.

41 H. Alerding, History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes, Carlon & Hollenbeck, Indianapolis, 1883, 61; J.J. Conway, 27.

42 J.J. Conway, 26.

CHAPTER II

FATHER GIBAULT'S ATTACHMENT TO THE AMERICAN CAUSE

Father Gibault was not only an apostle. He was an American patriot. Next to the renown of his long and devoted missionary career, is the illustrious part which he took in the Conquest of the Northwest Territory.¹

Soon after his return to his residence at Kaskaskia, the Illinois country became involved in the great struggle which began at Lexington. The English by their forts at Detroit, Kaskaskia, and Vincennes, controlled the West, and instigated the Indians to lay waste the frontiers of the United States.² It is a well known matter of history that during the commencement of our revolutionary struggle, the heart-rending scenes and widespread ravages of our Indian foes on the Western frontier, were caused principally by the ammunition, arms, and clothing supplied at these British military stations. It was the English Lieutenant-Governor at Detroit, Sir Henry Hamilton, who sent messages and proclamations to the Indian villages and the French trading

- 1 J.J. Conway, S.J., "The Beginnings of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, 1764-1776." Mo. Historical Society, No. 14, Mo. Hist. Soc., 1897, 30.
- 2 John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Church in the United States (1763-1815). D.H. McBride & Co., Akron, O., 1888, II, 187.

posts to incite the inhabitants of this region to wage a sanguinary war against the settlers on the Western frontiers of the United States.³

Colonel George Rogers Clark proposed to the Virginian government an expedition to capture these posts and secure this country. He was a man of strong will, of lofty imagination, of unconquerable courage, of great daring combined with wonderful shrewdness, a lover of freedom and his native land. A Virginian by birth, soon after attaining his majority he had cast in his fortunes with the handful of settlers in Kentucky. On December 10, 1777, Clark first presented the matter to the great Governor Patrick Henry.⁴ Henry gave eager attention to Clark. In Clark's memoir we find that "at first he seemed to be fond of it; but to detach a party at so great a distance, although the service performed might be of great utility, appeared to be daring and hazardous, as nothing but secrecy could give success to the enterprise."⁵

But Henry's great mind grasped not only the danger the invading party might be involved in, but the vast benefit it might

- 3 Alexander S. Withers, Chronicles of Border Warfare, pub. by Joseph Israel Clarksburg, Va., 1831, 185.
- 4 H.W. Beckwith, Illinois State Historical Library Collections, I., Ill. State Hist. Library, Springfield, Ill., 1903, 190; John Esten Cooke, Virginia, A History of the People, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1887, 10th ed., 450.
- 5 William Hayden English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio, 1778-1783, and Life of General George Rogers Clark. The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 88.

be to the future of the country if the campaign should prove successful. He realized that it was a matter of the greatest importance, and required the earnest and careful consideration of the wisest and most discreet men in the state. He invited as his confidential counselors and advisers upon this memorable occasion three men who fully came up to that requirement, namely⁶ Thomas Jefferson, George Wythe, and George Mason.

Patrick Henry, Jefferson, Wythe, Mason and Clark were in consultation upon the subject of the contemplated campaign for several weeks, and Clark records in his memoir that every inquiry was made into his proposed plan of operations, and particularly that of retreat, in case of misfortune, across the Mississippi into the Spanish territory. Clark finally received⁷ the approval of the Virginia authorities on January 2, 1778.

The Virginia Council having approved Clark's plan, the Governor gave Clark a Colonel's commission, and committed to him two sets of instructions, one expressing a purpose to defend Kentucky only, and the other, which was to be kept secret, author-⁸izing him to attack Kaskaskia.

In the latter part of May, 1778, Clark and his men left the mouth of the Kentucky river for the falls of the Ohio, where they arrived in good condition. They landed on Corn Island, then

⁶ W.H. English, 88.

⁷ H.W. Beckwith, IHC, I, 191.

⁸ Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., N.Y., 1897, 117.

about seventy acres in extent, and proceeded to organize for the⁹ campaign against the British posts of the Northwest. It was here at Corn Island, opposite Louisville, that Clark learned of the¹⁰ Treaty of Alliance between France and the colonies. The effect of this treaty had a wonderful influence upon the subsequent events of the campaign.

On June 24, leaving twenty men at Corn Island, Clark left with his crew of one hundred and fifty-three men, and on the 28th landed on a small island in the mouth of the Tennessee river in¹¹ order to make final preparations for the march. Here Clark met several hunters, among whom was John Saunders who was very willing to show them the route to Kaskaskia. So from the Tennessee river they proceeded further down the Ohio to Fort Massacre, now¹² Fort Massac, being about forty miles above its mouth.

From Fort Massac they were led through tangled and pathless forest for some fifty miles. After that the work was less difficult as they got out among the prairies, but on these great level meadows they had to take extra precautions to avoid

- 9 Jacob Piatt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood, the American Historical Society, Chicago, 1919, I, 147.
- 10 Charles and George Herbermann, "Very Reverend Pierre Gibault, V.G.", Historical Records and Studies, United States Hist. Soc., N.Y., 1913, VI, part II, 135.
- 11 Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, 147.
- 12 Firmin A. Rozier, History of the Early Settlement of the Mississippi Valley, G.A. Pierrot & Son, St. Louis, 1890, 71.

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being seen. They were obliged to journey some one hundred and twenty miles to reach Kaskaskia, a British post located on the Mississippi river, below St. Louis on the Illinois side.¹⁴

After a six days' tramp, they arrived within three miles of Kaskaskia on the late afternoon of July 4, 1778.¹⁵ Little did Rocheblave dream that his power would so soon be a thing of the past as he sat beside his table, ink horn, drying sand, quill and paper before him, pouring out his woes to the Governor-General at Quebec. His letter held such bits as these:

I am, monsieur, discouraged. No words in English can fittingly express my despair. These settlers--Mon Dieu! What settlers they are! There is not one among them loyal to our great and good Majesty, King George; and they are bold; they converse much concerning the Colonial troubles--ma fois, it is a bad trouble; but for all that, our young men are running away to join Mr. Washington's army, helped thither by the Indians and traders. Why! this very day Governor, I heard with my own ears my daughter singing a rebel song as she sat at her wheel. And when I questioned her as to where she got the ballad she made answer that it had been writ by the priest and then by him set to a melody. Now if the shephard is so minded, what will the

- 13 Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, G.P. Putnam's Sons, N.Y., 1900, II, 184.
 14 English, op. cit., 166.
 15 J.H. Schlarman, From Quebec to New Orleans, Buechler Pub. Co., Belleville, Ill., 1929, 496.

sheep do? Voila! The sheep they
follow....¹⁶

Such was the spirit of Kaskaskia with "the priest", the dominant figure there directing the course of events. He was a shrewd and learned Frenchman, actuated by the same influence that caused Lafayette and other Frenchmen to espouse the cause of the colonies, and he did likewise.

Prior to his arrival at Kaskaskia Clark had sent two spies, who took up residence and posed as hunters; from them he received information of the outlay of the town. Clark, however, worked independently of the Americans at the village, and as a consequence missed many things that would have assisted him.¹⁷ The spies themselves were not acquainted with his purpose.

Clark reported to Governor Henry. From his agents' investigation Clark had learned that "the principal inhabitants are entirely against the American cause, and look on us as notorious rebels that ought to be subdued at any rate," but he was of the opinion that "after being acquainted with the cause they¹⁸ would become good friends." There was another version, however, according to which the spies made known that there were "strong traces of affection for the Americans, among some of the

¹⁶ Laura Dayton Fessenden, "Illinois During the Revolution," Transactions of the Ill. State Historical Society, Springfield, Ill., 1901, 69.

¹⁷ Clark to Henry, American Historical Review, Macmillan & Co., N.Y., VIII, 1903, 492.

¹⁸ Ibid.

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inhabitants."

Clark's account in its dramatic effect and freshness of narrative is worth recording: On the evening of the fourth of July, 1778, "we got within three miles of the town of Kaskaskia, having a river of the same name to cross to the town. After making ourselves ready for anything that might happen, we marched after night to a farm that was on the same side of the river about a mile above the town, took the family prisoners, and found plenty of boats to cross in, and in two hours transported ourselves to the other shore with the greatest silence. I learned that they had some suspicion of being attacked, and had made some preparations, keeping out spies, but they, making no discoveries, had got off their guard. I immediately divided my little army into two divisions; ordered one to surround the town, with the other I broke into the fort, secured the governor, Mr. Rochblave, in fifteen minutes had every street secured, sent runners through the town, ordering the people, on pain of death, to keep close to their houses, which they observed, and before daylight had the whole town disarmed."²⁰

On the morning of the 5th of July, a few of the principal men were arrested and put in irons. Soon afterward, Father Gibault, accompanied by five or six aged citizens, obtained

19 Mann Butler, A History of Kentucky, Wilcox, Dickerman & Co., Louisville, Ky., 1834, 46.

20 English, (Clark's Letter to George Mason), 168, 169.

permission to wait on Clark. Surprised, as they had been by the sudden capture of their town, and by such an enemy as their imagination had painted, they were still more so when admitted to his presence. Their clothes were dirty, and torn by the briars, and their whole appearance was frightful and savage. Those acquainted with the delicacy and refinement of the ancient French, can alone appreciate their embarrassed condition. It was some time after they were admitted into the room where Clark and his officers were seated, before they could speak; and not even then till their business was demanded. They first asked which was the commander; so effectually had the expedition confounded all ranks and distinction. Colonel Clark being pointed out, the priest, in a subdued tone, which indicated what he felt, said that the inhabitants expected to be separated, perhaps never to meet again, and they begged to be permitted to assemble in their church, and there to take leave of each other.

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Clark mildly told the priest that he had nothing to say against his religion; that it was a matter which Americans left for every man to settle with his God; that the people might assemble in their church if they would; but that they must not venture out of town. Nearly the whole French population

- 21 Clarence Walworth Alvord, "The Illinois Country 1673-1818," Illinois Centennial Commission, Springfield, Ill., 1920, I, 327.
- 22 Henry Brown, The History of Illinois, J. Winchester, N.Y., 1844, 237.

assembled in the church. The houses were deserted by all who could leave them; and Clark gave orders to prevent any soldiers from entering the vacant buildings.²³

After the close of the meeting at the church, a deputation, consisting of Father Gibault and several other persons, waited on Clark, and said "...that their present situation was the fate of war, and that they could submit to the loss of their property; but they solicited that they might not be separated from their wives and children; and that some clothes and provisions might be allowed for their support."²⁴

Clark feigned surprise at this request, and abruptly exclaimed, "Do you mistake us for savages! Do you think that Americans intend to strip women and children, or to take the bread out of their mouths? My countrymen," said Clark, "disdain to make war to prevent the horrors of Indian butchery upon our own wives and children, that we have taken arms and penetrated into this remote stronghold of British and Indian barbarity; and not the despicable prospect of plunder.

"That now the King of France has united his powerful arms with those of America, the war would not, in all probability, continue long; but the inhabitants of Kaskaskia were at liberty to take which side they pleased, without the least danger to

23 John Reynolds, The Pioneer History of Illinois, second ed., Fergus Printing Co., Chicago, Ill., 1887, 96.

24 Beckwith, op. cit., 202.

either property or families. Nor would their religion be any source of disagreement; as all religions were regarded with equal respect in the eye of the American law, and that any insult offered it would be immediately punished. And now, to prove my sincerity, you will please inform your fellow citizens, that they are quite at liberty to conduct themselves as usual, without the least apprehension.

"I am now convinced, from what I have learned since my arrival among you, that you have been misinformed, and prejudiced against us by British officers; and your friends who are in confinement shall immediately be released."²⁵

In a few moments after the delivery of this speech, the gloom that rested on the minds of the inhabitants of Kaskaskia had passed away. The news of the treaty of alliance between France and the United States, and the influence of the magnanimous conduct of Clark, induced the French villagers to take the oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth of Virginia.²⁶ They assembled at the Old Cathedral Church where the Te Deum was loudly chanted and the old bell proclaimed the liberty for which they longed.²⁷

Fortunately, rifles and swords played but a small part in the conquest of Illinois; the promise of liberty and the news of

²⁵ Beckwith, 202.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Rozier, op. cit., 72.

the colonies' alliance with France were persuasive. Pursuant to the submission of Kaskaskia, a small detachment of the Americans under Captain Bowman, accompanied a volunteer company of French militia, at once marched rapidly on Cahokia. The inhabitants of this small village, on hearing what had taken place at Kaskaskia,²⁸ readily took the oath of allegiance to America.

Thus Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and other French villages on the Mississippi river fell into the hands of the Americans without the shedding of a single drop of blood. Every one of the inhabitants took the oath of loyalty, except one man, Philippe Rastel de Rocheblave, the commander of the garrison at Kaskaskia, who was violent and insulting. So Clark, despatching a report to Patrick Henry, sent him along to Williamsburg, Virginia, as a prisoner, sold his slaves for 2,500dollars and divided the money among his men.²⁹ The obnoxious governor possessed the written instructions which he had received from Quebec, Detroit, and Michilimackinac, for exciting the Indians to war, and remuner-³⁰ating them for the blood which they might shed.

It was evident that Clark could succeed only through the friendship and co-operation of the French settlers, and Clark

28 English, (Bowman to Brinker, July 30, 1778), I, 558; Roosevelt, II, 190; George Bancroft, History of the United States of America, last revision, D. Appleton & Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1917, 46.

29 Grace Humphrey, Illinois, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1917, 46.

30 Withers, op. cit., 187.

realized it. And of all these, no man's influence was so important as that of Father Gibault; for he was most familiar with the inhabitants there. It was he who had administered to their spiritual wants, had advised them in their business and other affairs, had baptized their children, had given consolation to their sick, had buried their dead.

Father Gibault was destined to be of incalculable service to Clark in all future operations for the conquest of the Illinois and Wabash country. He was unquestionably the ablest man in the entire Northwest territory. The people there were predominantly French, or of French descent, and were all animated by that common race prejudice that then existed between the English and French people.³² Gibault himself, according to the Kaskaskia Records, "was very slow to recognize the change in the civil government of the country when it was ceded by France to England, which was quite distasteful to him...But in 1776, when the Vicar-General of the Illinois country, the former cure, Sebastian L. Meurin, officiated, we find this transfer indicated in the mention of Mr. Hugh Lord, Captain commanding for his Britannic Majesty, and his signature and those of some of his officers are subscribed to one entry. In May, 1778, Father

31 Jacob Piatt Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest." Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 10, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill., 1906, 25.

32 Logan Esarey, History of Indiana from Its Explorations to 1922, Dayton Historical Pub. Co., Dayton, O., 1922, 58.

Gibault condescends to speak of Mr. De Rochblave as Commandant-in-Chief in the country of the Illinois, but does not say under which king; and before he made the next entry, on the 4th of August of the same year, the hapless Rochblave, to Gibault's great satisfaction, was on his way to Virginia, a prisoner of war, and Clark and his 'Long Knives' as his men were called, held the fort."³³

During the long period between Father Gibault's arrival in the Illinois country and the capture of Kaskaskia, there could not, in the very nature of things, be much sympathy on the part of the priest or people with the English, who had so recently supplanted the French as rulers; and this state of feeling undoubtedly goes far to account for the wonderful success of Clark in capturing and holding possession of the rest of the Illinois and Wabash country. In order to bring about harmony and good feeling, it was only necessary to remove the idea which the English authorities had endeavored to instill into their minds, that the Americans were savage and brutal. Clark understood thoroughly the importance of securing this unity of good feeling, and he had lent himself to seeming severity against the people, for a time, only to benefit by the great reaction which he knew would immediately follow when they realized that it was the British

³³ Edward Gay Mason, Illinois in the 18th Century. Kaskaskia and its Parish Records. Fergus Historical Series, No. 12, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, 1879, 177, 178.

rulers he regarded as enemies, and not the French inhabitants. The time for showing this had now arrived, and fortunately the representative on this occasion was Father Gibault.³⁴

A letter written by Henry Hamilton to Guy Carleton on August 8, 1778, shows how the British feared Father Gibault.

A party of three hundred rebels had arrived in the "Illinois", taken Rochblave prisoner, and exacted from the people an oath of obedience to Congress. Rebel officer and thirty men gone to Cahokia to receive the allegiance of people there; has no doubt they are now at Vincennes, as Gigault, a French priest, had his horse ready to start from Cahokia, to receive the submission of the people at Vincennes....³⁵

No man has paid a more sincere tribute to the services rendered by Father Gibault to the American cause than Clark himself. It was a matter of deep importance, especially after the arrest of Rocheblave, for Clark to conciliate, if possible, the ancient inhabitants residing at Kaskaskia. This he effectually did through the agency of Father Gibault.³⁶

Many of the able men in the Illinois country traveled about

³⁴ English, I, 191.

³⁵ Report on Canadian Archives, 1882, Douglas Brymner, archivist, Maclean, Roger & Co., Ottawa, Canada, 1885, 17.

³⁶ John Law, The Colonial History of Vincennes, Harvey, Mason and Co., Vincennes, Ind., 1858, Appendix, 53.

a great deal, and there can be no question but that Father Gibault was much more widely informed than Clark or any other western man. He was in communication continuously with Quebec, traveled frequently between Kaskaskia, Vincennes, and all the other parts. It would be a gross reflection upon his intelligence to assume that he was not well informed about the Revolutionary War, and he was certainly not the only man having such information in Kaskaskia before Clark's conquest.³⁷

Although the writer is firmly convinced that the United States is greatly indebted to Father Gibault for the part he played in the winning of the West, he does not favor making this patriot priest so conspicuous as to underrate the work of our great hero, George Rogers Clark. For instance, one prominent Catholic citizen of Vincennes,³⁸ writes:

In accounts originating from Clark and his command, it is stated that when his small force appeared before the walls of the town of Kaskaskia, from indications observed, they feared they would meet with resistance, but a Catholic priest opened the gates of the fort and approached Gen. Clark and had an interview with him. The priest was undoubtedly Pierre Gibault.

- 37 Joseph J. Thompson, "Penalties of Patriotism", Illinois State Historical Society Journal, IX, January, 1971. Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, Ill., 401.
- 38 Henry S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702-1901, Moore and Langen, Terrehaute, Ind., 1902, 86, 87.

As a matter of fact, Father Gibault was at Kaskaskia, the night when the town was surprised and taken. "The town", writes Clark, "was thrown into the wildest state of consternation and abject terror."³⁹ Even Father Gibault was for a time at a loss to understand Clark. Like his people, he had heard that all Americans were barbarians and savages. But he determined to call on the Colonel,⁴⁰ which resulted then in Clark's acknowledging this priest's great influence which caused the French to take the oath of fidelity to the Republic.

Kaskaskia was then to Illinois what Paris is at this day to France---the great emporium of fashion, gayety, and happiness; it was at that time the strongest and most populous of the Illinois settlements, and possessed a strong and well armed force⁴¹ for defense. It is true that on the invasion of Canada in 1775, Carleton, to strengthen the posts of Detroit and Niagara, had withdrawn the small British garrison from Kaskaskia,⁴² but there was a local militia that could have given Clark plenty of opposition; however, no resistance was offered. Why? Were the inhabitants afraid? Did Clark have them cowering and trembling before him? Surely we cannot give full credit to Clark's highly colored statement which would make abject cowards of these sturdy frontiersmen who had established one of the foremost

³⁹ J.J. Conway, op. cit., 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁴¹ Reynolds, op. cit., 50.

⁴² Bancroft, V, 311.

settlements then in America. As is well known, the Frenchman is highly expressive. He supplements his speech with gestures and attitudes, frequently very emphatic, and Clark may have mistaken the Frenchmen's expressive attitude for fear.

To any one who knows anything about the missionary spirit, it sounds ridiculous to assert that a missionary priest was terrified in a physical sense. Of what had Pierre Gibault to be afraid? Physical danger was no new experience to him. That he was polite and deferential and did not bellow and blaspheme as was quite usual with men of that period is not conclusive proof that he was fearful. If he showed deep concern it was only for the welfare of his people, whose fate at the hands of these rough, ignorant strangers he could not foretell, especially if the newcomers proved hostile to the settlers.⁴³

In view of all these facts, Clark's intimations that the inhabitants and Father Gibault were panic-stricken and terrorized do not appear plausible. Clarence Alvord, who has made perhaps the most particular examination of the incidents connected with the taking of Kaskaskia, says: "Clark's description of the fear into which the people of Kaskaskia were thrown by the appearance of his band on the night of July 4th and 5th, 1778, may

⁴³ Joseph J. Thompson, "Illinois' First Citizen---Pierre Gibault", ICHR, I, July, 1918, The Ill. Cath. Historical Society, Chicago, 1918, 86.

be discounted." ⁴⁴ Clark himself in other writings furnishes evidence which tends to prove that Father Gibault was not terrified. In a letter to George Mason, Clark says: "The priest that had lately come from Canada had made himself a little acquainted with our dispute...and was rather prejudiced in favor of us." ⁴⁵

Clark said of the affair at Kaskaskia that, when his presence was first known the people determined to give him battle; but that a priest, by the name of Gibault asked him by what authority he came and for what purpose, and whether he intended to interfere with the religious worship of the people. ⁴⁶ Clark informed him that he came by the authority of the state of Virginia and that the people might worship as they saw proper. Here then we have the secret of the bloodless capture of Kaskaskia. Clark's reply to Gibault was the key that opened the gates to him without opposition. Father Gibault told him that he himself was on the same side with him, that he had already espoused the cause of the American colonies and that by his influence over the inhabitants of Kaskaskia he would secure him

44 Clarence Walworth Alvord, "Kaskaskia Records, 1778-1790", in Collections of the Ill. State Hist. Library, pub. by the Trustees of the Ill. St. Hist. Library, V, 1919, p. XXXII of introductions.

45 Ill. Historical Collections, VIII, "George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781", ed. by James Alton James, pub. by the Trustees of the Ill. St. Hist. Library, Springfield, Ill., 1912, 121.

46 Alvord, "The Illinois Country 1673-1818", Ill. Centennial Commission, Springfield, Ill., 1920, I, 327.

admission without the least opposition, but with the full appro-
bation of the people.⁴⁷

After this interview, Clark further says that all opposi-
tion or talk of resistance ceased, and that he was allowed to
take peaceful and quiet possession of the place without firing a
gun. Burnet informs us in his "Notes" that the inhabitants were
predisposed to submit;⁴⁸ and Bancroft tells us that "the inhabi-
tants gladly bound themselves to fealty to the United States."⁴⁹

This then is the true statement of the capture of Kaskaskia
by Clark on July 4, 1778, and in accord with the statements of
Clark concerning it. Who, let me ask, was the real hero in the
bloodless capture of Kaskaskia? No fairminded man, with all the
facts and circumstances before him, will hesitate to say Father
Pierre Gibault. Without his aid and influence the force at the
command of Kaskaskia would have annihilated the strength of
Clark, and the expedition would have ended in failure.

47 Joseph J. Thompson, ICHR, IV, 294.

48 Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the North
Western Territory, Derby, Bradley & Co., Cincinnati, O.,
1847, 77.

49 Bancroft, V, 311.

CHAPTER III

THE SUBMISSION OF POST VINCENNES

When General Clark had thus obtained possession of Kaskaskia and all the other French villages on the Mississippi River, he had fully accomplished the objects embraced in his commission from Governor Henry.¹ But he was not to receive his discharge. His invaluable services and his undoubted courage were not to be dispensed with. He was to receive a new commission, not from Governor Henry, but from Father Pierre Gibault.

Clark indeed occupied a position of vantage; but his situation became daily more hazardous so long as his enemies held the posts on the Wabash River. Commanded by General Hamilton, Post Vincennes was the channel of communication and commerce between Canada, Detroit, and the Ohio, and thence to the Mississippi and Louisiana. With money and supplies gradually diminishing, Clark's motley troop of soldiers could not be held together without an objective for which to work. Vincennes must be taken at the earliest possible moment. In this project² Clark's prudent judgment was to serve him well.

1 Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement, Houghton, Mifflin & CO., N.Y., 1897, 117.

2 Clark to Mason, Illinois Historical Collections, "George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781," ed. by James Alton James, pub. by the Trustees of the Ill. Hist. Library, Springfield, Ill., 1912, VIII, 122.

The most influential man in any French village of the eighteenth century was the priest. Clark was quick to sense the fact that Father Gibault was a man of power in the village of Kaskaskia. He now called the priest into conference, professedly³ for information. It was then that Clark received the commission to undertake and accomplish more in the Territory of the Northwest. Father Gibault urged him to press on and capture the strong and important Fort Sackville at Vincennes, since this stronghold, situated as it was in the very heart of the country, was a secure base for operations in all directions and the real key to the possession of the entire Northwest. The priest represented to him how easy it was of accomplishment and how the same conditions on the part of the inhabitants in the post there would operate in his favor, as they had operated at Kaskaskia. He promised and agreed to furnish Clark additional men and means⁴ to render the expedition successful. Clark was convinced and agreed to command the expedition to capture the fort at Vincennes.

Clark certainly had good grounds for summoning the priest. From information he had received he had reason to suspect that "Mr. Jebault the priest was inclined to the American Interest previous to our arrival in the Cuntrey and now great respect

- 3 Jacob Platt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood, the American Historical Society, Chicago, 1919, I, 148.
- 4 Henry S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702-1901, Moore & Langen, Terrehaute, Ind., 1902, 89.

showed him having great Influence over the people at this period St. Vincent also being under his Jurisdiction I made no doubt of his Integrity to us I sent for him on the Subject of St. Vincennes...⁵"

Clark determined to take Vincennes. The problem of winning Vincennes, however, was as complicated and difficult as it was important and necessary. Thus has an historian appraised it: "The conquest of Vincennes stands second to no similar event in American history in its far-reaching importance to the nation, if not to the race, for it is doubtful if the experiment of the new republic could have been successful without this circumstance--certainly the result would have been radically different."⁶ Clark's shortage of men, and the ever-ready disposition of the frontier soldier to quit army life, and hurry to his home, the long and dangerous march to the post on the Wabash, the hostile Indians,--all these factors made conquest by force a sheer impossibility; and, yet, the Illinois Country could not be called American, so long as the American troops were menaced by the English in the heart of the region.

Father Gibault told Clark that there was no British garrison at Vincennes at the time; that Lieutenant-Governor Abbott,

5 Clark's Memoir, Illinois Historical Collections, VIII, 237.

6 E.A. Bryan, "Indiana's First Settlement," Magazine of American History, XXI, 1889, N.Y., 396.

the English commander had lately gone to Detroit. He further explained that it would be an easy matter to take the place once the French there were informed as to the state of affairs.

Clark had implicit faith in Gibault, and, no doubt, realized that surprising a town and temporarily getting the upper hand is not so important as gaining the confidence and co-operation of the inhabitants of the country, especially when the "army" of occupation is destitute of all means of support. Help was needed to carry on the campaign.

The man who assisted Clark in securing the co-operation of the French inhabitants at Post Vincennes was no other than the priest himself; he volunteered to win that place for the colonel. He suggested that he be permitted to precede any armed force that might be sent there. He would attempt to secure the allegiance of his parishioners there to the American cause without bloodshed.⁸ Clark describes Gibault's offer as follows:

In answer to all my Queries he informed me that he did not think it was worth my while to cause any military preparation to be made at the Falls for the attack of St. Vincennes although the place was strong and a great number of Indians in its Neighborhood that to his Knowledge was Genly at was that Gov.

7 Logan Esarey, History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1922, Dayton Historical Pub. Co., I, 1922, 59.

8 George Bancroft, History of the United States of America, last revision, D. Appleton & Co., N.Y., 1888, V, 311.

Abbot had a few weeks left the place on some business to De Troit; that he expected that when the Inhabitants was fully acquainted with the nature of the war that their Sentiments would greatly change that he new that his appearance their would have great weight Eaven among the savages that if it was agreeable to me he would take this business on himself and had no doubt of his being able to bring that place over to the American Interest without my being at the Trouble of Marching Troops against it...

Clark, who had a remarkable gift of forming a correct estimate of men, recognized the value of Gibault's influence, and cultivated him in such a way that they were soon in full accord. Convinced, therefore, of the priest's influence in the country and likewise of his fidelity, Clark willingly assented to the missionary's plan. With Gibault leading the party, the plan involved the dispatching of a few men to Vincennes. To George Mason Clark wrote: "M. Jeboth, the Priest, to fully convince me of his attachment offered to undertake to win that Town for me if I would permit him and let a few of them go; they made no doubt of gaining their friends at St. Vincents to my Interest..."¹⁰ Telling the American commander that he would have nothing to do with "the temporal affair," Gibault said "that he would give

⁹ Clark Memoir, 237.
¹⁰ William Hayden English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio, 1778-1783, and Life of General George Rogers Clark, The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1896, I, 419.

such hints in the spiritual way as would be conducive to the
¹¹
 business."

The plan further provided that with Gibault, in charge of the commission to direct the whole affair, another should accompany him to attend to the purely civil part of the commission. Dr. Jean Laffont, a physician, was named as his associate. Clark was pleased; he had been wanting the matter conducted in this manner. To have Gibault propose it was doubly gratifying. There still lurked in Clark's mind, however, a suspicion of the integrity of the men to whom he had entrusted the commission. With the retinue, therefore, accompanying Father Gibault and Dr. Laffont, Clark secretly sent a spy. The expedition was on its
¹²
 way to Vincennes, July 14, 1778.

Arriving safely at the post, the missionary and Laffont spent two days in explaining matters to the people. Clark had given verbal instructions to Gibault, but had seen fit to write the instructions of Laffont. The instructions were written in
¹³
 French. They also took with them many letters from their friends in Kaskaskia, which assisted materially in winning their favor. The proclamation from Clark recited his purpose of checking Indian raids promoted by Hamilton, and told the story of the French alliance. He urged the inhabitants to become citizens of

11 Ibid.

12 Clark's Memoir, Ill. Hist. Collections, 237, VIII; Butler 62.

13 Dunn, Indiana, op. cit., 149.

Virginia, and to raise a militia company to defend the fort. In case of the inhabitants' acceptance of the conditions to surrender, they were to have every assurance of advantageous and beneficial commercial relations. The threat of conquest by force remained, should they not take the oath of allegiance. On their acceptance of the terms, the people were to have the privilege of electing a commander, raising a company, and taking possession of the fort. Food for the garrison would be furnished by the inhabitants, who in turn would be reimbursed by Clark. Attaching the leading role to Father Gibault, Clark added a significant sentence in conclusion: "You will act in concert with the priest, who I hope will prepare the inhabitants to grant you their demands."¹⁵

The commission as finally composed was made up of Gibault, Moses Henry, Dr. Laffont, Captain Leonard Henry, and in the retinue was Clark's spy, Simon Kenton.¹⁶ The English in the

- 14 James Alton James, The Life of George Rogers Clark, The University of Chicago Press, 1928, 122; Theodore Calvin Pease and Marguerite Jenison Pease, George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois, 1763-1787, Ill. State Historical Society, 1929, 44.
- 15 Charles George Herbermann and Henry F. Herbermann, "Very Reverend Pierre Gibault, V.G.," Historical Records and Studies, The U.S. Cath. Hist. Soc., N.Y., VI, part 2, 1913, Clark to Laffont, Ill. Hist. Collections, VIII, 54.
- 16 Ezra Mattingly, "Vincennes, One of the Oldest Towns of the West," Magazine of Western History, XII, Magazine of Western History Publishing Co., N.Y., 1890, 239; History of Knox and Daviess Counties, Indiana, The Goodspeed Publishing Co., Chicago, 1886, 41.

meantime had been momentarily disconcerted by the capture of General Burgoyne at Saratoga and they were now expecting the Americans to attack Detroit from Pittsburg. The reverse had thrown them on the defensive and had all but destroyed their prestige among the Indians. As a result Laffont and Gibault found no British troops at Vincennes and likewise none of their Indian allies.¹⁷ The British officer, Abbott, had left a few partisans, who, however, withdrew as soon as they learned the purpose of the commission. Having communicated with the traders, and citizens, Gibault and Laffont called a meeting at the church, on the twentieth of July. Mayor Francis Busseron, whom Gibault knew well, received an account of what had occurred in Illinois, and the purpose of the priest's visit to Vincennes. At the close of services, and in the presence of the audience, the mayor arose and interrogated Gibault so skillfully concerning the justice of the cause of the colonies against England, that all of the assembly were at once inclined to make friends with the new power.¹⁸

In his enthusiasm for the American cause, Gibault found no difficulty in persuading his parishioners.¹⁹ With the vote of acceptance of the new government they took the oath of allegiance in a solemn manner.²⁰ Joseph J. Thompson, a good authority on

17 Logan Esarey, op. cit., I, 59.

18 Mattingly, 239.

19 Esarey, I, 59.

20 James H. Perkins, Annals of the West, James R. Albach, St. Louis, 1850, 198; John Law, Colonial History of Vincennes, Harvey, Mason & Co., Vincennes, Ind., 1858, 25.

Gibault, tells us that the priest himself administered the
²¹oath; Mattingly, however, states that Dr. Laffont administered
²²the oath to the congregation. It is of some interest to know
 if one can determine just what took place at Vincennes when
 Father Gibault, Dr. Laffont, and the others went over there, and
 in fact, to know all about the errand. Renouncing all fealty to
 George III of Great Britain, and his successors, they promised
 to do nothing prejudicial to the cause of liberty and pledged
 loyalty to the Republic of Virginia; they further swore to aid
 in stamping out all conspiracies of treason against any of the
²³colonies. One hundred and eighty-four men of Vincennes affixed
²⁴their signatures, or in most cases their marks.

It took Father Gibault just three days to win this English
 stronghold on the Wabash. Through the mediation of Gibault the
²⁵inhabitants subscribed the oath of allegiance on July 20. Drums
 beat. The British flag, on the fort, was hauled down. The
 American flag was run up. The little church bell tinkled out
 the joy of liberty in the wilderness. Independence of Great
²⁶Britain had been declared west of the Alleghanies!

21 Joseph J. Thompson, "Letters and Documents," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, IV, 1921, 293.

22 Mattingly, op. cit., 241.

23 Ill. Hist. Collections, VIII, 54.

24 Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, 151.

25 Bessie Taul Conkwright, "Captain Leonard Helm," Indiana Hist. Bulletin, X, 1933, 414.

26 Mattingly, 241.

Thus the priest captured Vincennes not by fire and sword, but by the well-known disinterestedness of his personal character, his long proved zeal for the people's true welfare, and the eloquent voice of his patriotism.²⁷ True, a fact that made the capture of the town comparatively easy, was that Father Gibault knew that Abbott, the English governor, had left Vincennes shortly before, and that the fort and town were at that time virtually in the possession and control of the French inhabitants. The few British soldiers at the post, commanded by Joseph St. Marie, could make no resistance to the popular sentiment, and withdrew²⁸ to Detroit.

The weight of authority, derived from primary sources and supported by the almost unanimous interpretations of secondary works, gives to Father Gibault the leadership in the conquest of Vincennes. Mann Butler states that "the principal charge was in the hands of M. Gibault."²⁹ Gibault preached peace and union to the citizens, used his personal influence to promote the enterprise, and on his return made a written report to Clark, but denied that he was responsible for the submission of Vincennes. It was Dr. Laffont who managed affairs openly in Vincennes and

27 Theodore Calvin Pease and Marguerite Jenison Pease, George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois, 1763-1787, Illinois State Historical Society, 1929, 44.

28 J.H. Schlarman, From Quebec to New Orleans, Buechler Pub. Co., Belleville, Ill., 1929, 510; Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, VI, 1888, 722.

29 Mann Butler, A History of Kentucky, 1834, 62.

claimed the honor of the success.

Laffont's testimony is contained in his letter to Clark on August, 7, 1778. From this we learn that Father Gibault accompanied him, acted as secretary, and made a report to Clark. Laffont's report stressed the fact that Gibault had not meddled in civil affairs with the French or Indians, but had confined himself solely to exhortation, tending toward peace and union and the prevention of bloodshed. Laffont claimed for himself the sole responsibility of the undertaking.³¹ Father Gibault had Dr. Laffont make the report. It cannot be doubted that he virtually dictated to the doctor what the report should contain, and unquestionably had it made in that form for the purpose of preserving the distinction between ecclesiastic and civil features of the mission.

From Clark's memoir we learn that "Mr. Jebault and party accompanied by several gentlemen of St. Vincennes Returned about the first of August with the Joyfull News during his absence on this business which caused great anczyety in me (for without the possession of the post all our Views would have been blasted) I was exceedingly Ingaged in Regulating of things in the Illinois.

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30 C.W. Alvord, "Documents: Father Pierre Gibault and the Submission of Post Vincennes, 1778", American Historical Review, XIV, Macmillan & Co., N.Y., 1909, 548.

31 Clarence Walworth Alvord, "Kaskaskia Records, 1778-1790," Ill. Hist. Collections, The Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, V, 1909, 51.

32 James Alton James, "George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1781," Illinois Historical Collections, VIII, 1912, 239.

Clark usurped all the authority necessary to carry out his points. He established a garrison at Cahokia, commanded by Captain Bowman, another at Kaskaskia, commanded by Captain Williams, and, in order to give the people of Vincennes the support which they had a right to expect, he sent his trusted friend, Captain Leonard Helm, with a single soldier whose name was Henry to take charge of the post at that place.³³ Captain also received the appointment as "Agent for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Wabash."³⁴

The writer is at variance with Alvord's statement concerning the capture of Vincennes. This authority claims that "Clark pretended to make preparations for an attack upon Vincennes, in the hope that the French of Kaskaskia, anxious for their friends and relations, would offer to win the village by persuasion. In this he was successful, and several Kaskaskians came forward as advocates for Vincennes. Among these was Father Gibault..."³⁵

It is quite certain that the plan to seize Vincennes originated in Clark's mind; in fact, Clark states this in his letter to George Mason, written a year and a half after the taking of

33 James Baldwin, The Conquest of the Old Northwest, American Book Co., Chicago, 1901, 163.

34 J.C. Wells, "Virginia's Conquest--The North-Western Territory," Magazine of American History, N.Y., 1886, XVI, 453.

35 C.W. Alvord, Illinois Historical Collections, 1909, V, xxvii.

36

Vincennes. He realized that his position was precarious as long as the British held the posts on the Wabash River. But his company of soldiers was too small to risk a bold advance upon Vincennes. So he sent for M. Gibault, and explained to him his views." From Humphrey's account we get the statement that

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"Clark planned an expedition against the fort on the Wabash, and sent for Father Gibault." Alvord, however, is correct when he

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mentions that the "chief instrument in the winning of Vincennes was Father Gibault." One writer has it that "Vincennes yielded

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to the Americans without other force than the moral suasion of Father Gibault." Historians agree that the priest volunteered

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to go, with a few of his compatriots, to Vincennes, and there endeavor to get the people to join the Americans, as being their natural friends and allies.

41

It is true that, Father Gibault, being a British subject,

- 36 Clark's "Memoir," Ill. Hist. Collections, 1912, VIII, 237; William Hayden English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio 1778-1783 and Life of General George Rogers Clark, The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1896, I, 200.
- 37 John Law, Colonial History of Vincennes, Harvey, Mason & Co., Vincennes, Ind., 1858, 25.
- 38 Grace Humphrey, Illinois, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1917, 48.
- 39 Alvord, "Documents: Father Pierre Gibault and the Submission of Post Vincennes, 1778," Am. Hist. Review, XIV, 1909, 544.
- 40 Charles I. Walker, "The Northwest during the Revolution," Michigan Pioneer Collections, Lansing, Mich., III, 1881, 22.
- 41 Claude Halstead Van Tyne, "The American Revolution 1776-1783," The American Nation, IX, ed. by Albert Bushnell Hart, Harper & Bros., N.Y., 1905, 282; Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, G.P. Putnam's Sons, N.Y., 1900, II, 190.

had committed treason; if captured, he probably would have been executed. His proceedings, consequently, were done at great personal risk. However, they were fully justified by the situation from the point of view of humanity and necessity.⁴²

Gibault was clever in shifting the responsibility to another. He preferred to do this, so that, if the issue should be different from what was anticipated, he would still be able to use the argument to the British authorities, which we find he actually put forward in 1786. He did not emphatically deny participation in the submission of Vincennes, as Alvord states.⁴³ If he was to reenter the service of the church in Canada, he was obliged to deny the grave charge of treachery which had been made against him by British officers. His words of June 6, 1786, to the Bishop were:

With regard to the inhabitants of Post Vincennes whom, according to reports current in Canada, I persuaded to commit perjury, perhaps the residents themselves in order to escape from trouble with the Governor Henry Hamilton put all the blame on me and perhaps he himself and the officers invented the story that a people so ignorant could have been won over persuaded only by me, advancing this supposition to shield their mistake by shifting all responsibility to my shoulders. The truth is, that, not having been at Post Vincennes for a long time, when I saw the opportunity to go

42 Herbermann, op. cit., 138.

43 Alvord, op. cit., Ill. Hist. Collections, V, xxxi.

with Mr. Laffont, who had a large company, I took advantage of it to do my missionary work. Had I interfered in so important a matter my handwriting would have appeared in some document and other proofs would be given than such phrases as 'it is said' or 'it is reported to us'. And for my part I have had the good fortune to procure attestation made by Mr. Laffont himself on our return to the Illinois, in consequence of some banter addressed to me on the subject. I send you the original attestation written and signed in his own handwriting, keeping for myself only a copy for fear of exposing myself to suspicion. You can judge better from these writings than from the rumors....⁴⁴

The whole record of Father Gibault with reference to vacillation is contained in this passage quoted from his letter to the Bishop of Quebec, and it may be doubted if any one will charge up any fault or lack of perseverance in his patriotism on account of anything contained therein.

To sum up the Vincennes situation, therefore, it seems well settled that Father Gibault suggested the mission to Vincennes, suggested that Dr. Laffont accompany him, told Clark that on account of his priestly office he could not properly take the management of the political or civil features of the mission, and according to all the evidence he pursued a consistent course throughout the proceedings, the outstanding result of which was that Vincennes the accession of which was according to Clark "of

44 Gibault to the Bishop of Quebec, Ill. Hist. Collections, 1909, V, 541.

infinite importance to us", was gained to the American cause without the expenditure of either blood or treasure.

The neighboring Indian tribes wondered at the change that took place both at Kaskaskia and at Vincennes. Gibault went among them and told them that their "Great French Father", who had always been kind to them was now the friend of the Americans and would be very angry with them if they continued to war with the colonists. As a result, the Kaskaskias, Peorias, and Michigameas proposed peace; and when Clark sent a messenger to the Kickapoos and Piankeshaws, near Vincennes, they also agreed to lay down their arms.⁴⁵ Father Gibault was instrumental in conciliating these Indians and attaching them to the American cause. He got into communication with Tabac, the Piankeshaw chief, who was known as "The Grand Door to the Wabash" because he controlled the lower part of the territory on that river.⁴⁶ The Piankeshaws pledged fealty which they never afterwards violated, though the English on numerous occasions sought an alliance with them.⁴⁷

Incidentally it should be mentioned that the fidelity of the Piankeshaws as exhibited through "The Grand Door" was one of

45 John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Church in the United States 1763-1815, D.H. McBride & Co., Akron, O., 1888, II, 188.

46 Consul Wilshire Butterfield, History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns 1778 and 1779, Columbus, O., 1904, 130.

47 Jacob Piatt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, The American Historical Society, Chicago, 1919, I, 151, Memoir, Illinois Historical Collections, 1912, VIII, 281.

the strongest elements of supremacy for the American cause, and without which there are grave possibilities that the Americans would not have been able to hold the Wabash country.

Regarding negotiations with the Indians for treaties, Clark mentions only himself and the Indians as actors. Tradition and stray reference have ever since had it, however, that Father Gibault was the most influential factor in concluding a satisfactory peace with the Indian tribes. G. A. Fuchs, under the direction of Mr. William Phillipson, painted a picture of a treaty that was held at Cahokia. This picture adorns the wall of the interior of the State House at Springfield, Illinois; and the painter, who has faithfully portrayed every feature of the meeting, places Father Gibault in the foreground near Colonel⁴⁸ Clark and his officers. There is no doubt but that Gibault, who was well known to all the Indians and always on excellent terms with them, exercised a great influence in the negotiations of these treaties. Gibault, the scholarly, self-denying, spiritual adviser, had prepared the minds of the people to accept Clark⁴⁹ and the American rule.

Sufficient facts are related in the foregoing pages to

48 Joseph J. Thompson, "The Winning of Vincennes," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, 1918, I, 245.

49 Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., N.Y., 1897, 120.

enable the reader to form his won conclusions as to credit or blame for American ascendancy in this territory. But it is interesting to know what Gibault's contemporaries thought on the subject. They testified in such a way as to fix him securely in the grateful affection of a patriotic people. Clark wrote Governor Henry and George Mason about Father Gibault, and as early as December 15, 1778, we find Governor Henry writing to Clark and saying: "I beg you will present my compliments to Mr. Gibault⁵⁰ and Dr. Lafont and thank them for me for their services." At the same time the governor counseled with Clark about means of securing possession of Detroit:

Upon a fair presumption that the people about Detroit have similar Inclinations with those at Illinois and the Wabash, I think it possible that they may be brought to expell their British Masters and become fellow Citizens of a free State. I recommend this to your Serious Consideration and to consult with some confidential Persons on the Subject. Perhaps Mr. Gibault the priest (to whom this Country owes many Thanks for his zeal and services) may promote this affair....⁵¹

The governor knew how influential Father Gibault had been in securing Kaskaskia and Vincennes, and thought that he would be

50 Governor Henry to Clark, Dec. 15, 1778, Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia, ed. by H.R. McIlwaine, The Va. State Library, Richmond, Va., 1926, I, 345.

51 Henry to Clark, Dec. 12, 1778, ibid., 339.

equally powerful in securing the good-will of the French people of Detroit.

Writing to his friend Richerd Henry Lee on April 19, 1778, not yet having received Colonel Clark's report of the capture of Vincennes, Governor Henry stated that "Detroit now totters; and, if Clark had a few of McIntosh's forces, the place would be ours directly. I have lately sent the French there all the state papers, translated into their language, by the hands of a priest, who I believe has been very active."⁵²

The services Father Gibault rendered Clark in this campaign were acknowledged by a resolution of the Legislature of Virginia⁵³ in 1780.

There is no better proof of the effective work of Father Gibault in the winning of Vincennes than the evidence expressed in the words of his enemies, the British officers. The head of the British militia during these spirited times at Michilimackinac was Patrick Sinclair, from whose hand came a letter, a significant passage from which follows:

I must again so early trouble you with a letter of business and request that small as it may appear, (for from very small evils great ones may arise), it may meet with your attention and be communicated

⁵² Henry, quoted in Butterfield, op. cit., 452.

⁵³ Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1998, II, 301; John Law, op. cit., appendix, 53.

to his Excellency on a favorable occasion. General Carleton and the Bishop sent up one Gibon [Gibault] a priest on a mission for reasons best known to themselves, the part which he had represented in the Rebel interest, and may hereafter improve upon, required in my humble opinion a mandate from Mon Seigneur for his appearance at Quebec. His conduct will certainly justify me to the General in making this representation, and I do it to avoid any future severity which may, by means of Indians be necessary to direct against an individual of the sacred and respectable clergy.... He removes to the Spanish and this side of the Mississippi occasionally and may be addressed at the Caskaskies.⁵⁴

Evidently of the opinion that Gibault needed discipline badly, Sinclair preferred that the bishop should recall the priest rather than force Sinclair "by means of Indians," to punish him.

The general and the bishop, however, did not act as promptly as Sinclair wished, and on February 15, 1780, Sinclair again wrote to Brehm from Michilimackinac. Having mentioned some facts in connection with the removal of the church and the priest's house there, Sinclair proceeded: "The subject leads me to inquire whether or not Monseigneur Briand will issue out two mandates for the Vicar General of the Illinois. Allow me in an official capacity to request that you will mention this again to the General as indispensably necessary. Let them be sent to me. I will forward them and publish them at the Illinois in order to

54 Sinclair to Brehm, Haldimand Papers, Michigan Pioneer Collections, Lansing, Michiga, 1886, IX, 527.

blast any remains of reputation which the wretch may have been able to preserve among Scoundrels almost as worthless as himself."⁵⁵ The British commander, De Peyster, wrote General Haldimand on January 29, 1779, that "...Chevalier was informed there at St. Josephs that Gibease [Gibault] the priest had been at the Post Vincent and at the Ouia with a party of rebels and obliged six hundred inhabitants to swear allegiance to the congress,⁵⁶ etc."

In a letter of General Hamilton to General Haldimand dated Detroit, September 22, 1778, giving Haldimand a detailed account of conditions in the Illinois, Hamilton stated that "Gibault the Priest had been active for the Rebels. I shall reward him if possible."⁵⁷ On December 27, 1778, writing to General Haldimand, General Hamilton made the threat that "could I catch the priest--Mr. Gibault--who has blown the trumpet of rebellion for the Americans, I should send him down unhurt to your Excellency, to⁵⁸ get the reward for his zeal."

Reporting from Vincennes on December 19, 1778, also to General Haldimand, Hamilton detailed the recent events:

55 Ibid., 539.

56 De Peyster to Haldimand, Wisconsin Historical Collections, ed. by Reuben G. Thwaites, Madison, Wisconsin, 1888, XI, 123.

57 Haldimand Papers, Michigan Pioneer Collections, IX, 1886, 480.

58 Ibid., 482.

One of the deserters was a brother to Gibault the Priest, who had been an active agent for the rebels and whose vicious and immoral conduct was sufficient to do infinite mischief in a country where ignorance and bigotry give full scope to the depravity of a licentious ecclesiastic. This Wretch it was who absolved the French inhabitants from their allegiance to the King of Great Britain. To enumerate the vices of the inhabitants would be to give a long catalogue, but to assert that they are not in possession of a single virtue, is no more than truth and justice require, still the most eminently vicious and scandalous was the reverend Monsr. Gibault.⁵⁹

It is not difficult to conclude upon whom General Hamilton placed the responsibility for the defection of the Illinois people from British dominion.

As proof that Father Gibault's interest in the new government continued, we read in a letter of Sinclair to Brehm, Michilimackinac, October 29, 1779, that "the priest Gebau [Gibault] and one Mayette a Canadian was very active in the Rebel Interest."⁶⁰

Thus did the English commanders testify their hatred for the great services rendered by this patriotic priest, the leading spirit of the entire country. A champion of the American cause, Father Gibault was truly "the power behind the throne."

⁵⁹ Ibid., 497.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 531.

CHAPTER IV

FATHER GIBAULT'S PART IN THE RE-TAKING OF VINCENNES

Colonel Clark's career was soon threatened by dark clouds. One-half of his army of two hundred men, who had enlisted for three months only, insisted upon returning homeward, and the reinforcements he had hoped for failed to show up. Clark had conceived far-reaching plans for the capture of Detroit, the principal seat of the English power in the Northwest, where Hamilton was in command. To balance the loss of his Virginia veterans Clark had recruited several companies among the French Creoles, whom the Colonel's personal popularity and perhaps also the hope based on the French American alliance of again fighting under the French flag had attracted to the American chief's banners. But when he came to count his forces he was convinced¹ that the attack on Detroit must be given up.

Hamilton, on the other hand, soon heard of the capture of Vincennes and was resolved to retake the Old Post. The British plan of attack in 1778 called for a vigorous drive against the Americans along the frontier. Previously, only Indians had been employed in any appreciable numbers in the Northwest, but

1 Charles George Herbermann and Henry F. Herbermann, "Very Reverend Pierre Gibault, V.G.," Historical Records and Studies, The United States Catholic Historical Society, N.Y., VI, part 2, 1913, 138.

Hamilton now planned to use a combined force of Indians and
²
 Regulars.

Though unauthorized by his superior officer, General Haldimand, the Governor of Canada, and though disappointed by the failure of the Indians to gather at Michilimackinac, he boldly pushed southward, starting on October 7, 1778, with some sixty Indians and about one hundred and seventy-five white men. Father Pothier blessed this British expedition.³ As they proceeded, bands of Indians, craving American scalps, flocked to the General, swelling his force to five hundred. They marched amid a hundred difficulties across country some six hundred miles and in seventy-one days reached Vincennes.⁴ On December 17, 1778, Hamilton retook Vincennes, made Captain Helm a prisoner, and christened the post Fort Sackville.⁵ Helm was not aware of the approach of the British troops until they had nearly reached Vincennes. He then wrote to Clark advising him of the fact. The "express" who carried the letter was killed, the letter taken and sent to Detroit.⁶ General Hamilton summoned the inhabitants to the old log church and there forced them to renounce their

2 George McCormack, "Tribute to a Patriot," in Columbia, Knights of Columbus, New Haven, Conn., February, 1934, 8.

3 Francis Marion Van Natter, "Cathedral of Old Vincennes," in National Republic, April 1933, 6.

4 Herbermann, 138.

5 The Indiana Historical Bureau, No. 11, Indianapolis, 1929, 19; George Bancroft, Hist. of the U.S. of America, (last revision), D. Appleton & Co., N.Y., 1888, V, 312.

6 Hiram W. Beckwith, "Clark's Conquest of the Illinois," in Ill. Historical Collections, Springfield, 1903, I, 226.

allegiance to America and renew it to George III, King of Great Britain. For a second time the church had taken a definite part⁷ in a stirring historical event.

This church, by the way, was built about the year 1714 some eighty yards southeast of the fort, and in it the travelers, traders, and adventurers worshipped on Sundays. It was used for its original purpose until 1784, when a new building was erected and the old one was taken for a residence by the pastor, Father Gibault. The old house was a rude affair, built of logs, with thatched roof and dirt floor. Beneath each man's pew the dead of his family were buried. This church was on the present site⁸ of St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral.

Father Gibault, in consequence of his connection with the happenings at Vincennes, incurred the displeasure of the English as we have seen in the preceding chapter. He was arrested by Hamilton and held as a prisoner for some time. Finally it was agreed by Hamilton to liberate him if he would leave the place. Father Gibault agreed to this and left, and returned to Kaskaskia.⁹

Hamilton now dreamed of sweeping the Virginians from the valley of the Wabash and the Spaniards from the Mississippi

7 Francis M. Van Natter, 6.

8 Ezra Mattingly, "Vincennes, One of the Oldest Towns of the West," Magazine of Western History, Magazine of Western History Pub. Co., N.Y., 1890, XII, 237.

9 Henry S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702-1901, Moore and Langen, Terrehaute, Ind., 1902, 92.

Valley. But, as in Clark's case, Hamilton's warriors also became homesick, and at last he found himself at the head of an army of eighty men in the newly fortified stronghold of Vincennes.¹⁰

In the meantime, rumors of Hamilton's success, greatly magnified in their progress, had reached Clark. Upon receiving intelligence that Hamilton intended during the spring to also recapture Kaskaskia, and then march southward and invade Kentucky, Clark determined to take the initiative, and by a decisive winter campaign to break up the British program.¹¹

Before we follow Clark in the final conquest of Vincennes in 1779, there are two incidents which should be recorded here. The first occurred in December, 1778, on a night shortly after Christmas when Clark was visiting the good people of Prairie du Rocher, who gave a ball in his honor. While the merriment was at its height, there came a report, afterwards proved to be false, that Hamilton and his troops were near, preparing for an attack. The incident is perhaps best told in Clark's own words:

About 12 O'clock there was a very sudden change by an Express arriving enforming us that Governor Hamilton was within three miles of Kaskaskias with eight hundred Men, and was determined to Attack the Fort that night;...I ordered our Horses

10 Herbermann, op. cit., 138.

11 John Esten Cooke, Virginia, A History of the People, tenth ed., Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1887, 451.

Saddled in order if possible to get into the Fort before the Attack could be made... on our Arrival we found every thing as calm as we could expect....The weather had been bad, and it was then thought the Attack would not commence until it cleared up But no Person seem'd to doubt of the Enemies being at hand.... The Priest of all men the most affraid of Mr. Hamilton, he was in the greatest consternation, determined to Act agreeable to my Instruction....I pretended that I wanted him to go to the Spanish side with Publick Papers and Money. the Proposition pleas'd him well, he immediately started and getting into an Island the Ice passing so thick down the Messicippi, that he was obliged to Encamp three days in the most obscure part of the Island with only a Servant to attend him I spent many serious reflections during the night.¹²

Inasmuch as it was a dangerous mission, Clark's judgment of the missionary does not seem to be fair. He didn't send Gibault across the Mississippi with the papers and money to give him a chance to escape from Hamilton. Herbermann, a careful student of history, sound in his opinion and conservative in his statements, tells us about the incident of sending Father Gibault to the Spanish side as follows:

It was while matters looked most gloomy that Clark, fearing disaster, sent Father Gibault with his official papers and money across the Mississippi in the

¹² Clark's Memoir, in Illinois Historical Collections, ed. by James Alton James, pub. by the Trustees of the Illinois Historical Library, Springfield, Ill., 1912, VIII, 133.

dead of winter in January, 1779, to place them in safety on the Spanish bank of the Mississippi. To show his friendship for the American commander, the curé, attended by one man only, undertook the mission. For three days he was detained by the floating ice on an island in the Mississippi, but at last successfully carried out his mission.¹³

The second incident occurred the latter part of January, 1779. From August 1, when Father Gibault returned, until January 29, 1779, Clark had not received a single communication from Vincennes;¹⁴ that is, he had not been definitely informed of Hamilton's proceedings at and around that place. Early in December, Captain Helm had written Clark about supplies and equipment that were needed.¹⁵ How Clark obtained definite and most valuable information relative to the situation at Vincennes, and the consequences resulting from it, will now be revealed.

Associated directly with Father Gibault in these stirring times was a man of Italian descent and to that time of Spanish adoption named Francois Vigo. He was born at Mondovi, Italy, about the year 1747; however, he is often said to have been a

¹³ Herbermann, op. cit., 139.

¹⁴ Bessie Taul Conkwright, "Captain Leonard Helm," Indiana Hist. Bulletin, 1933, X, 423; John Law, The Colonial History of Vincennes, Harvey, Mason & Co., Vincennes, Ind., 1858, 26.

¹⁵ Cecil H. Chamberlain, "Colonel Francis Vigo and George Rogers Clark," Ill. Catholic Hist. Review, 1928, X, 140.

Spanish merchant or a Sardinian. His own nephew, A.B. McKee¹⁶ said he was born "in the northern¹⁷ part of Italy."¹⁸

In the year 1778, Colonel Vigo was residing in the town of St. Louis, then a Spanish post, doing business as a merchant and Indian trader.¹⁷ He was, at that time, a man of considerable influence and property.¹⁸ From the life of Clark by James we are informed that relations between Clark and Fernando de Leyba, the Spanish lieutenant-governor at St. Louis, were begun immediately after the capture of Kaskaskia and became constantly more intimate, through correspondence, through the influence of Colonel Francis Vigo, trusted associate of Clark and partner in business with de Leyba, and through the visit of Clark at the home of the latter in St. Louis.¹⁹ "This gentleman," Clark wrote Governor Henry on September 16, 1778, "interests himself much in favor of the States, more so than I could have expected. He has offered me all the force that he could raise, in case of an attack by Indians from Detroit, as there is now no danger from any other quarter."²⁰

- 16 Giovanni Schiavo, The Italians in America Before the Civil War, The Italian Hist. Society, Chicago, 1934, 193.
- 17 A.B. McKee, "Colonel Francis Vigo," in Indiana Magazine of History, pub. by the Department of History of Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., 1923, XIX, 357.
- 18 30th Congress, 1st Session, House Report No. 216, 1847, 1.
- 19 James Alton James, The Life of George Rogers Clark, The University of Chicago Press, 1928, 123.
- 20 Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, "George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781," ed. by James A. James pub. by the Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill., 1912, VIII, 69.

Vigo, the right-hand man of the Governor, sympathized with the American colonies in their efforts to attain independence. With an innate love of liberty, and an attachment to republican principles, he overlooked all personal consequences; and as soon as he learned of Clark's arrival at Kaskaskia, he crossed the line-went there and tendered him his means and his influence, both of which were joyfully accepted. During the interview Colonel Clark proposed that Vigo go to Vincennes to learn the actual state of affairs and see about providing the necessary articles, as Vigo had a trading store there and was on the best²¹ of terms with the Creoles. Vigo did not hesitate a moment.

Vigo started on his career as a gentleman-spy on December 18, 1778, all unconscious of the fact that the British had re-²² captured Vincennes on the previous day. When about six miles from Vincennes, on the Embarrass River, on December 24, Vigo was seized by a party of Indians, stripped of his clothes, money, and horse, and brought a prisoner before Hamilton.²³ Being a Spanish subject, and consequently a non-combatant, General Hamilton, although he strongly suspected the motives of his visit, dared not confine him; he accordingly admitted him to his parole on the single condition that he should daily report himself at

21 J.C. Wells, "Virginia's Conquest. The North-Western Territory," Magazine of American History, 1886, XVI, 453; John Law, op. cit., 29.

22 Cecil H. Chamberlain, op. cit., 140.

23 "Memorial of Francis Vigo," in House Report, No. 216, 30th Congress, 1st Session, 41.

the Fort. On his frequent visits there, he was enabled to ascertain the state of the garrison, its numerical force, means of defense, position, in fine all the matter necessary to make an accurate report, as soon as liberated.²⁴

Hamilton in the meantime was urged by the French inhabitants of the town to release him. They even threatened to withhold supplies from the garrison, unless he would comply with their demand. After some days Hamilton decided to allow Vigo to go free, demanding first that he sign a promise not to do anything injurious to British interests during the period of the war; but Vigo flatly refused. At last, after three weeks, a compromise was effected, and he signed an agreement "not to do anything injurious to the British interests, on his way to St. Louis."²⁵

On his way to St. Louis Vigo did nothing injurious in the slightest degree to British interests. But he had no sooner set his foot on shore there, and exchanged his dress, than he hastened to Kaskaskia to inform Clark as to the situation at Vincennes. Vigo reached Kaskaskia on January 29, 1779, and gave Clark the first definite information he received as to the whereabouts of Hamilton's army. He narrated the occurrence of the severe blow to American progress, and, among other things that will be told later in this chapter, he notified Clark that the British

²⁴ John Law, op. cit., 30.

²⁵ J.C. Wells, op. cit., 454.

garrison had been considerably reduced due to raiding parties
 sent against the Ohio River settlements.²⁶

Vigo was a great admirer of Father Gibault. He had helped Father Gibault to establish the mission at St. Louis, as well as aiding him elsewhere, and was a staunch supporter of the church. It was Gibault who enlisted Vigo in the enterprise, and induced him to furnish means to carry it on. Vigo was at the time a zealous and devoted Catholic and a member of Father Gibault's
 congregation.²⁷

Clark does not reveal the secret of Vigo's appearance at Kaskaskia at this time. He does not tell us that Father Gibault went again to Vincennes early in 1779, but Law, who was for years Vigo's attorney and had reasons to know first hand every move Vigo made in connection with the government, says Father Gibault was in Vincennes at that time. Law says:

It was entirely through the means of Father Gibault that Hamilton released Colonel Vigo when sent by Clark to ascertain the true situation of affairs at Vincennes. He was captured by the Indians and taken to Fort Sackville where he was kept a prisoner on parole for many weeks, and released, entirely by the interference of Father Gibault, and the declaration of the

26 Alexander S. Withers, Chronicles of Border Warfare, pub. by Joseph Israel Clarksburg, Va., 1831, 188.

27 Henry S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702-1901, Moore & Langen, Terrehaute, 1902, 93.

French inhabitants at Vincennes, who, with their priest at their head, after service on the Sabbath, marched to the fort and informed Hamilton that they would refuse all supplies to the garrison unless Vigo was released.²⁸

There is but one conclusion the reader can draw from this account, namely, that Father Gibault demanded Vigo's release and his demands were heeded. The priest headed his parishioners who brazenly notified Hamilton that Vigo must be let go or else they "would refuse all supplies to the garrison."

Some historians question the statement of Law relative to Father Gibault's interceding for Vigo's release. Butterfield²⁹ terms it an error. Another writer³⁰ states that "Gibault was at Kaskaskia at the time, and was sent to Spanish territory by Clark. Besides, Hamilton was so incensed at Gibault for aiding the American cause that he would certainly have taken him into custody." It is true that after the capture of Vincennes, Hamilton writing to General Haldiman, made the threat that "could I catch the priest, Mr. Gibault, who has lately blown the trumpet of rebellion for the American, I should send him down unhurt to your Excellency, to get the reward of his zeal."³¹ But Hamilton

28 John Law, op. cit., 55.

29 Consul Wilshire Butterfield, History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns 1778 and 1779, pub. under the auspices of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1904, 691.

30 Cecil H. Chamberlain, op. cit., 141.

31 Haldiman Papers, Michigan Pioneer Collections, Lansing, Mich. 1886, IX, 482.

feared to carry out his threat; had he dared, he would have stirred up rebellion among the inhabitants of Vincennes whose censure he had already incurred. The fact that Gibault crossed into Spanish territory is no conclusive proof that he was at Kaskaskia when Hamilton released Vigo. Gibault started on this mission across the Mississippi during the Christmas holidays, and nowhere do we find that he returned directly to Kaskaskia. True, he was at Kaskaskia on February 5, 1779, for he gave a³² blessing then to Clark's troops leaving for Vincennes.

The story, however, has this much support for its credibility: Law was personally acquainted with Vigo and learned what he knew of Vigo's experiences from the lips of Vigo himself. Until the critics prove this story false, I see no reason to reject it. Historians of acknowledged ability have accepted it.³³ The trustworthy Justin Winsor substantiates it; Van Natter,³⁴ writing for the National Republic, likewise confirms it; and Joseph J. Thompson does not hesitate to credit Gibault for Vigo's³⁵ release. Moreover, one Italian writer, who is loath to say anything good about the priest, states that "Father Gibault helped him loyally in this part of the plan: he led the civil

32 Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1908, II, 301.

33 Justin Winsor, The Westward Movement, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., N.Y., 1897, 133.

34 Van Natter, op. cit., 6.

35 Joseph J. Thompson, "Illinois' First Citizen--Pierre Gibault," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, 1918, I, 380.

population to threaten General Hamilton etc."³⁶ He also states that it is logical to think that Vigo, on his journey to Vincennes, "must have had at least a note by Clark for Father Giebault."³⁷ Very likely, Vigo did have messages from Clark. Tradition has it that he ate them when taken prisoner.

The intelligence that Vigo gave to Clark on January 29, 1779, was as follows:-That Hamilton had weakened himself by sending his Indians against the frontiers and to block up the Ohio; that he had not more than eighty men in the garrison, nor more than three pieces of cannon and some swivels mounted; that the hostile Indians were to meet at Post Vincennes in the spring, to drive the Americans out of Illinois, and attack the Kentucky settlements in a body; that the troops under Hamilton were repairing the Fort, and expected re-inforcements from Detroit in the spring; that he did not believe they were under much apprehension of a visit, and believed that if we could get there undiscovered,³⁸ we might take the place.

With this, the first reliable and accurate information Clark had about the capture of Vincennes, all indecision was immediately dispelled. On Vigo's report Clark based his plans and resolutions to proceed at once against Vincennes. Up to this moment he had been very busy consolidating his positions at

36 Bruno Roselli, Colonel Francis Vigo, Savior of the Midwest, 22.

37 Ibid., 16.

38 Bancroft, op. cit., V, 313.

Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and other places on the Mississippi. Now Clark showed that daring which belongs to genius. Hastily he gathered his recruits from Cahokia, and, using these skillfully, aroused the Creoles of Kaskaskia from discouragement to a high pitch of enthusiasm for the campaign.³⁹ He knew he would be attacked and there was little hope of defense against such numbers that the British would collect in the spring. Safety lay in the offensive, if it could come in the nature of a surprise. But the terms of enlistment of many of his troops had expired, and they were unwilling to undertake another campaign. Again Father Gibault's power worked for the cause of liberty. The gap was⁴⁰ filled by French volunteers.

Father Gibault furnished General Clark two companies of troops, all members of his congregation. One of these companies was under the command of Robert McCarthy of Cahokia, and the other under the command of Francis Charleville.⁴¹ Moreover, he prevailed upon Francis Vigo, the wealthy trader, to extend credit⁴² to Clark; and, as we shall see in the next chapter, Vigo sacrificed everything, even his personal belongings, in the service of his adopted country.

39 Van Natter, op. cit., 7.

40 Pauline Lancaster Peyton, "Pierre Gibault, Priest and Patriot of the Northwest in the 18th Century," Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, pub. by the Society, 1901, XII, 486.

41 Cauthorn, op. cit., 93.

42 Ibid., 92.

On February 5, 1779, all preparations for the march from Kaskaskia to Vincennes having been completed, Colonel Clark and his little band of less than two hundred men moved out of the place under escort of the inhabitants of the village. Father Gibault "after a suitable discourse" gave his blessing to them⁴³ and their enterprise.

The daring march of Clark's men from Kaskaskia to Vincennes through the icy waters of the flooded lowlands is one of the outstanding achievements in our history. Anyone who has viewed the swirling waters of the Wabash at flood stage can only marvel at the audacity of that handful of men who challenged nature at her worst to reach an enemy of undetermined strength and protected by fortifications and artillery.

After two weeks of wading through backwater without sufficient food, they suddenly saw the mighty expanse of the turbulent river before them. There they were without means of transportation.⁴⁴ What were they to do? Turn back? Never! Father Gibault had made provisions. The scouts located the canoes that the priest, some time before, had ordered concealed in safe⁴⁵ places along the river for their use.

- 43 Clark's Papers, Ill. Hist. Collections, VIII, 139; Jacob
 44 Piatt Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest," in Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 10 of the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill., 1906, 26.
 44 J.C. Wells, op. cit., 454.
 45 George McCormack, "Tribute to a Patriot," in Columbia, Knights of Columbus, New Haven, Conn., February, 1934, 26.

Clark himself knew nothing of the lay of the land, neither did any of his men. It was Father Gibault who guided the expedition. It was he who prepared boats for their passage over the Wabash, and who provided for their generous and hearty welcome on their arrival at Vincennes. In a word, Father Gibault planned the entire route to Vincennes. No one but he possessed the requisite knowledge and influence to do it.⁴⁶ One evidence of his handiwork is the fact, that, when the party arrived at the Wabash, Clark ordered his scouts to look for boats and supplies. He was then about nine miles below Vincennes. Why should Clark have given such a command, unless there had been a pre-arrangement that boats and supplies would be furnished him? Would any man expect boats and supplies at that point, and under the circumstances? All we can say is that boats and supplies had been promised him, and, therefore, he expected them. And no one could have given such a promise with any reasonable hope of fulfillment except Father Gibault. On account of the uncertainty of the time of his arrival, the looked-for supplies were not to be had, but two boats were obtained, which enabled Clark and his party to cross the river.⁴⁷

After the Wabash River was crossed over, February 21, 1779, how was Clark's little army piloted to Vincennes through the flooded lowlands? Between them and the town was a veritable lake

46 Joseph J. Thompson, Illinois Catholic Historical Review, pub. by Ill. Cath. Hist. Society, Chicago, 1921, IV, 295.

47 Major Bowman's Journal, Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati, O., 1869, 102.

of drowned land, the water in some places being fifteen to
⁴⁸ twenty-five feet deep. It would have been foolhardy to make
 the attempt to pass over that place unless guided by those who
 were acquainted with the topography of the country. Then it
 could be done safely by threading their way through the waters,
 on the ridges and high grounds. This, then, was the method of
 advance Clark proceeded to follow.

Major Joseph Bowman, one of Clark's most trusted officers,
 kept a journal in which we note that Clark's party met duck
⁴⁹ hunters who conducted them to the Sugar Camp, then to Warrior's
 Island, and thence to the higher grounds on which Vincennes
 stands. But who were these duck hunters? Simply guides that
 had been furnished through the influence of Father Gibault.

Warrior's Island was at the time a small knoll of perhaps
 ten acres, entirely surrounded by water. It was in clear view
 of Vincennes and Fort Sackville. It was here that Clark re-
 sorted to the strategy of mounting his men on horses and marched
 and countermarched, with colors flying, in order to give the
 British garrison the impression that it was about to be attacked
⁵⁰ by a larger force than Clark actually had. Where did Clark get
 the horses upon which he thus mounted his men? They marched on
 foot and brought no horses with them. The good people of

48 Thompson, op. cit., 296.

49 Bowman's Journal, 104.

50 John Brown Dillon, A History of Indiana, Bingham and Doughty,
 Indianapolis, Ind., 1859, 147.

Vincennes influenced by their pastor furnished them.⁵¹ The inhabitants of Vincennes observed all the movements, but no one carried the information to the fort and Hamilton remained entirely ignorant of the impending attack until Clark's men opened⁵² fire at close range.

This fact, that the inhabitants of Vincennes did not so much as notify the British garrison of Clark's approach, shows that the French remained true to their oath to Gibault. Vincennes at the time had some six hundred inhabitants, of whom two⁵³ hundred and seventeen were considered fit to bear arms. Had this force, united with the garrison, opposed Clark doubtless his little army would have been repulsed. Consequently, we may in all truth affirm that without Father Gibault's having sworn the inhabitants of Vincennes to American allegiance, Clark's capture of that post would not have been possible.

On the morning of February 24, at about seven o'clock, Clark marched to the assault. The inhabitants instead of offering opposition received the troops with gladness, and surrendering the town, engaged with alacrity in the siege of the⁵⁴ fort.⁵⁵ The inhabitants themselves supplied with ammunition.

51 Thompson, 296.

52 Clark's Advance on Vincennes, Publication No. 3, by The Old Post Association, Vincennes, Ind., 8.

53 McCormack, op. cit., 26.

54 Alexander S. Withers, Chronicles of Border Warfare, Joseph Israel Clarksburg, Va., 1831, 189.

55 Clark's Memoir, quoted by J.B. Dillon, op. cit., 149.

At about nine o'clock Colonel Clark sent in a flag of truce, with a letter to the British commander, during which time there was a cessation of hostilities, and the famished soldiers who had been almost without food for a week were provided with a hot breakfast, prepared by the women of the parish, friends of Father Gibault. The letter of Clark is so characteristic of the man, so laconic, and, under such trying circumstances, shows so much tact, self-possession and firmness, that it will be quoted:

Sir:-In order to save yourself from the impending storm that now threatens you, I order you immediately to surrender yourself, with all your garrison, stores, etc; for if I am obliged to storm, you may depend on such treatment as is justly due a murderer. Beware of destroying stores of any kind, or any papers or letters that are in your possession, or hurting one house in town, for by Heavens, if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you.⁵⁶

The reply of Hamilton to this singular epistle shows he was already quailing: "Gov. Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Colonel Clark that he and his garrison are not disposed to be ⁵⁷awed into any action unworthy (of) British subjects."

The battle was renewed; the skill of Clark's riflemen wounded several of the men in the Fort. Clark felt from the

56 Colonel George Rogers Clark's Sketch of his Campaign in the Illinois in 1778-1779, and Major Bowman's Journal, pub. by Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati, O., 1869, 105.

57 Ibid., 106.

answer returned to his communication that another message would soon be delivered to him from the same quarter, and he was not long in receiving it. The flag of truce brought him as follows:

Gov. Hamilton proposes to Colonel Clark a truce for three days, during which time he promises that there shall be no defensive work carried on in the garrison, on condition that Colonel Clark will observe on his part a like cessation of offensive work; that is, he wishes to confer with Colonel Clark; as soon as can be, and promises that whatever may pass between them two, and another person mutually agreed on to be present, shall remain secret until matters be finished; as he wishes, that whatever the result of the conference may be, it may tend to the honor and credit of each party. If Col. Clark makes a difficulty of coming into the Fort, Lieutenant Gov. Hamilton will speak with him by the gate. 58
24th Feb'y, '79 Henry Hamilton.

If Governor Hamilton had known the man he was dealing with, he would have found that he would have made light of any difficulties "in coming into the Fort;" and if not already convinced of the daring of the foe he was contending with, one would have supposed Clark's answer would have set him aright:

Col. Clark's compliments to Gov. Hamilton, and begs leave to say, that he will not agree to any terms, other than Mr. Hamilton surrendering himself and garrison prisoners at discretion.

If Mr. Hamilton wants to talk with Col. Clark he will meet him at the church with Capt. Helm.⁵⁹

Laconic enough, surely, and easily understood; and so it was. For in less than an hour afterwards, Clark dictated himself the terms, which were accepted, a meeting having taken place in Father Gibault's church. The papers were signed on February 24, 1779. For a third time the hut-like church with its one door, no windows, involved not only the destiny of a continent but the entire cause of human liberty. On the following day, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, the British troops⁶⁰ marched out, and the Americans entered the Fort. The result of the signing of these papers was of national importance. It meant the end of British domination south of the Great Lakes; it gave the nation the vast Northwest Territory, and made possible the expansion of the nation to the Pacific.

Colonel Clark appointed Captain Helm civil and military commandant and returned to Kaskaskia as soon as practicable. The appointment, however, was only provisional. A report was⁶¹ then sent to the Governor of Virginia. The news of the capture was joyfully received by the Governor and forwarded to Congress. The county of Illinois was immediately organized. John Todd

59 Ibid., 107.

60 John Law, op. cit., 37.

61 J.C. Wells, op. cit., 457.

received the appointment of civil commandant and lieutenant-
⁶²
 colonel of the county. Clark was the hero of the hour, and Governor Henry, who had heard of Father Gibault's services, recommended him as an agent to the French there. But instead of the force of 2000 men Clark asked for the undertaking, only 400 marched west. These were sufficient, however, to hold what had
⁶³
 already been taken.

New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut claimed the conquered territory by virtue of their "sea to sea" charters, but Virginia's right to conquest obtained precedence, and she set up a temporary government which lasted till 1784. An appeal to general patriotism induced her to give up her claim to the national government in that year, and it was organized into the
⁶⁴
 Northwest Territory under General Arthur St. Clair.

That the British retook Vincennes on December 17, 1778, does not lessen the merit of Gibault and Laffont; that was due to the weakness of Clark's forces. The possession of Vincennes, even for a short time, had served its purpose. The Italian writer, already referred to in this chapter, would have us believe that "Father Gibault had unwittingly made trouble by prematurely
⁶⁵
 hoisting the American colors over Vincennes." This I cannot

62 Mann Butler, A History of Kentucky, Wilcox, Dickerman & Co., Louisville, Ky., 1834, 65.

63 Peyton, op. cit., 487.

64 Ibid.,

65 Bruno Roselli, op. cit., 14.

see. On the contrary, the information, imparted to the people of Vincennes as to friends, prepared the way for Clark's capture of that post--in fact, was an indispensable prerequisite. Without the achievement of Gibault and Laffont, Clark's march through a strange country and his taking of Fort Sackville with the aid of the people of Vincennes, already friendly to his cause, are unthinkable.

66

Truth compels the historian that the celebrated "Battle of Vincennes" was, militarily, not much more than a joke, gallant though the preparatory raid had been. Neither the British cannon, nor the famous marksmanship of the "Long Knives," dealt appreciable destruction on that day. The civil population decided the struggle. And in view of that fact, who was the individual who directed the course of events? The real hero that planned and accomplished the surrender of Fort Sackville? Hamilton saw clearly who it was that had been so instrumental in Clark's success, and he never ceased his scathing and denunciatory attacks on him, the Reverend Pierre Gibault, the Patriot-Priest of the West, without whose controlling influence the expedition against Fort Sackville would never have been undertaken, and the English would have still retained possession of the key of the Northwest Territory.

66 Louis Houck, op. cit., 300; J.H. Schlarman, From Quebec to New Orleans, Buechler Pub., Co., Belleville, Ill., 1929, 513.

CHAPTER V

FATHER GIBAULT'S FINANCIAL AID

The gaining of territory was not the most serious problem for George Rogers Clark. The financing of the enterprise was the most difficult, and it was here that Father Gibault and others demonstrated their loyalty clearly.

When Clark received authority to raise men for a conquest of the territory northwest of the Ohio, he was given twelve hundred pounds, about \$6,000, in state paper money for his expenses.¹ This sum was presented to him by the government of Virginia, for the expedition was sponsored by Virginia alone and not by the Continental Congress.² Virginia gave little attention to the needs of her western army. It was only through the personal sacrifice of Clark and his officers, and of Father Gibault and a few patriotic merchants that we were able to retain possession of the entire Northwest Territory, a possession so valuable when the Treaty of Paris was to be arranged.

Clark expended, in connection with his conquest, a sum in

1 Consul Wilshire Butterfield, History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns, 1778 and 1779, pub. under the auspices of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1904, 85.

2 30th Congress, 1st Session, House Reports of Committees, No. 216, 1847-48, 1.

3

excess of \$100,000. The problem of food supply was perhaps the most imperative of all his needs. Troops had to be maintained while on the march through wild country, and men in the garrisons of the frontier posts had to be subsisted during long periods of inactivity.

In materials other than food, Clark's needs were by no means simple. The varied nature of Clark's demands is well known in a study of his itemized disbursements. Incidentally it might be mentioned here that when Clark presented to Virginia the bill of expenses, the following item appeared: "M. Gibault, Laffont's expenses...\$657,00."⁴ This shows that when Gibault and Laffont gained the submission of Post Vincennes in 1778, Gibault undertook his mission in an official capacity as Clark's agent. There is no reasonable ground to doubt this. The horse he rode was paid for by Clark, who also defrayed the entire cost of the mission.⁵

It should be remembered that the demands upon Clark were not confined to the support of his troops. Widows and others were provided for, and, in addition, gifts and supplies had to be constantly furnished to the Indians, whose good will Clark

- 3 Joseph J. Thompson, "Father Gibault, the Patriot Priest of the Northwest," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, pub. by The Ill. Catholic Historical Society, Chicago, Ill., 1920, 74.
- 4 William Hayden English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio 1778-1783 and Life of General George Rogers Clark, The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1896, II, 1046.
- 5 James A. James, "George Rogers Clark Papers," Illinois Historical Collections, Springfield, Ill., XIX, 1924, 256.

6

was careful to cultivate.

Hard money was almost entirely lacking, and the common medium of exchange was Virginia currency. Not only was this a depreciated form of money but its scale of depreciation fluctuated so continually that its use was a never-ending source of vexation.⁷

To meet all these demands in an unsettled frontier country, in the absence of adequate governmental support, with little or no money was certainly no easy task. But Clark was fortunate in obtaining various sums from well-disposed citizens who advanced money to him on the credit of the state of Virginia.⁸ It should be borne in mind that Virginia at the time was fully absorbed in the more vital operations in the eastern campaigns, and Clark was of necessity thrown upon his own resources.

In the search for supplies the most obvious recourse was to the local inhabitants. These good French people were encouraged by their pastor, Reverend Pierre Gibault, not only to supply Clark's troops with provisions and other necessities, but to receive the depreciated continental paper currency of Virginia at par, for all supplies thus furnished. Father Gibault himself had on hand at the close of the campaign more than \$20,000 of

6 James G. Randall, "George Rogers Clark's Services of Supply," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, The Mississippi Valley Historical Association, VIII, 1922, 255.

7 Ibid., 255.

8 Ibid.

this worthless trash, of which not one dollar was ever redeemed. He publicly sold his own property to the Americans, accepting for it this Virginia scrip at face value, and induced the French settlers and merchants to do the same.¹⁰ This means of supply proved fruitful. Bowman enthusiastically praised the people of Cahokia for generously supplying him with a fifth of their cattle in the summer of 1779.¹¹

Father Gibault rendered efficient service by inducing his intimate friend, the wealthy Francis Vigo, to back the government. Vigo opened a business house, virtually a bank in Kaskaskia, and guaranteed the redemption of the paper money. Through him, friendly relations were established between Clark and the Spanish Commandant in St. Louis.¹² Vigo furnished large supplies out of his own stores and advanced money to the local inhabitants for the goods which they furnished to the troops. All this was accomplished through the influence of Gibault. Clark himself was unable to induce the inhabitants to part with their goods in exchange for the paper money.¹³ Much credit of course must be given to Vigo who so whole-heartedly complied

9 John Law, The Colonial History of Vincennes, Harvey, Mason and Co., Vincennes, Ind., 1858, 54.

10 Jacob Piatt Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest," Transactions of the Ill. State Hist. Society, Publication No. 10, Springfield, Ill., 1906, 26.

11 Clark's Papers in Ill. Hist. Collections, ed. by James A. James, Springfield, Ill., VIII, 1912, 327.

12 Joseph J. Thompson, "Penalties of Patriotism," Journal of the Ill. State Hist. Society, Springfield, Ill., IX, 1917, 402.

13 Ibid., 407.

with the wishes of his pastor. Without Vigo's ready cash, it is doubtful whether the inhabitants would have parted with their provisions.¹⁴

On the other hand, we have evidence of Gibault's co-operating with Vigo. The following account is interesting in that it further shows the intimate relation of these two patriots.

Memorandum of what I have furnished to Mr. Vigo, to wit:

2	low masses,	Mme. Valle)	
1	do	Mlle. Valle)	
2	do	Leaving for town)	
2	do	Mr. Ornet in arriving here)	
3	do	Mr. Ornet sometime later)	39 masses ---78
5	do	For the same on leaving)	
2	do	Mr. Vigo)	
20	do	Mme. Valle)	
2	do	Mme. Valle)	

20	bushels	corn	delivered to Mr. Chaperton for the Ouyas	
32	"	"	same for the Chevagun River	
29	"	"	at different times 1785 and 1786	
40	"	"	this year, everything without receipt	
17	"	")	
26	"	") as by receipts	
8 $\frac{1}{2}$	"	")	
172 $\frac{1}{2}$	bushels	corn	at 3 sous the bushel	517# 10s

1 note of Mr. Vigo for Mr. Dominic Bergan	100#	
Security by Mr. Vigo for Mr. LeGras for	69#	
1 note for Mr. Vigo for	784#	13s
	1499#	3s

The undersigned certifies the above account for the sum of fourteen hundred and ninety-nine livres and three sous correct and true except for error or omission.

Post Vincennes, July 3d, 1787.

15
P. Gibault, Priest.

14 House Report, op. cit., 41.

15 A translation from original MS. at the Harrison Mansion, Vincennes, Indiana.

Clark was likewise financially aided by a devoted Irish-Catholic patriot, to whom Americans should be forever grateful. This was Oliver Pollock, who emigrated from Ireland to Pennsylvania about the year 1760. He removed to Havana, Cuba, and then to New Orleans where he became a wealthy merchant. His reputation as a financier and zealous patriot had become so well known in Philadelphia that in 1777 he was appointed Commercial Agent both of the colony of Virginia and of the Continental Congress of the United States, at New Orleans.¹⁶ His services in upholding the revolution in the west were invaluable. He served Clark in much the same way that Robert Morris, the financier of the revolution,¹⁷ served Washington.

Governor Henry of Virginia authorized Clark to draw on Oliver Pollock for additional funds to aid him in his undertaking, at the same time writing Pollock to draw bills on France for \$65,000.¹⁸ In a letter of July 18, 1778, Clark wrote to Pollock: "I have succeeded agreeable to my wishes, and am necessitated to draw bills on the state and have reason to believe they will be accepted by you, the answering of which will be acknowledged by his Excellency the Governor of Virginia."¹⁹

The Revolution had scarcely begun when Pollock secured aid from the Spanish authorities for the American cause. By the end

16 Horace Edwin Hayden, "Oliver Pollock, His Connection with the Conquest of Illinois, 1778," Magazine of American History, ed. by Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, N.Y., XXII, 1889, 418.

17 James G. Randall, op. cit., 259.

18 C.W. Butterfield, op. cit., 86.

19 Clark's Papers, Ill. Hist. Collections, VIII, lxvii.

of the year 1777 Governor Galvez, largely through Pollock's influence, had aided the Americans by sending arms, ammunition, and provisions to the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia²⁰ amounting to \$70,000.

Beyond the first bills of credit sent to New Orleans, amounting to \$8,500, Clark asked that an additional \$5,000 worth of supplies suitable for his soldiers and for Indian presents²¹ should be forwarded to him by Pollock. Five hundred pounds of powder were sent at once in response to his request, but the demands of importers for silver money in exchange for their goods could not at the time be met by Pollock. He then granted Clark permission to take such articles as he needed from a cargo which had been sent up the river consigned to the agents of the general government. During September, 1778, two thousand pounds of powder and other supplies were sent by Pollock to Clark, valued at²² \$7,200. By February 5, 1779, bills were drawn on Pollock by Clark amounting to \$48,000. In paying \$10,000 of this amount, Pollock had been forced to dispose of his remaining slaves at a²³ great disadvantage. By July, 1779, Pollock had so far exhausted his credit that meeting a further order from Governor

20 Illinois Historical Collections, VIII, lxvi.

21 Theodore Calvin Pease and Marguerite Jenison Pease, George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois 1763-1787, Ill. State Hist. Society, 1929, 45.

22 James A. James, The Life of George Rogers Clark, University of Chicago Press, 1928, 125.

23 Illinois Historical Collections, VIII, lxxvii.

Henry for goods amounting to \$10,000 he was forced to mortgage
²⁴
 a part of his property.

Pollock borrowed \$80,000 on his own credit during the war, which was devoted to the use of Virginia and the United States. He continued until July, 1779, to pay boatmen and traders silver dollars for paper currency dollar for dollar. He became possessed of \$8,470 in continental currency, which he was forced to
²⁵
 keep, as it did not pass at New Orleans.

From the foregoing it is evident that Pollock is entitled to highest honors for furnishing supplies and funds to make the conquest of the Northwest possible. Not only did he furnish a service of essential supplies by way of the Mississippi and the Ohio, but he contributed what was equally important--namely, credit. The bills of credit Clark issued in exchange for supplies were satisfactory to the merchants and traders at their
²⁶
 face value, in silver by Pollock, on whom they were drawn.

To meet Clark's emergency demands Pollock drew upon his own private resources. He did not stop until he had exhausted his fortune. He borrowed money in his own name, mortgaged his property, and sold his slaves far under their value in order to obtain funds. His total advances to Virginia and the United States exceeded \$300,000, for all of which his credit was

24 Ibid., xcvi.

25 Ibid., xcviil.

26 Ibid., 5.

pledged.

The time came when Pollock could do no more. It then became necessary for him to protest Clark's bills. He wrote in February, 1779, "How Col. Clark and the State of Virginia expect such heavy sums is a mystery which time only can point out."²⁸ Twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of the bills drawn by Clark were under protest at New Orleans. They were issued in favor of a number of the inhabitants of Illinois.²⁹

Clark was grieved upon hearing of the failure of his most trusted source of credit. No one would take bills drawn on Virginia for a dollar's worth of supplies, unless endorsed by some responsible man. Clark himself then, and many of his officers, became endorsers. Father Gibault likewise endorsed the state bills and induced a number of his parishioners to do the same.³⁰ These French people to the limit of their means paid the bills; and nearly every one of them was financially crippled, or bankrupted, by doing so.³¹

We must not be too harsh in our criticism of the state of Virginia relative to her failure in supporting her western

27 H.E. Hayden, op. cit., 418.

28 James G. Randall, op. cit., 261.

29 James A. James, "Spanish Influence in the West During the American Revolution," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, pub. by the Miss. Valley Hist. Association, IV, 1918, 207.

30 Temple Bodley, George Rogers Clark: His Life and Public Services, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1926, 193.

31 Temple Bodley, "The National Significance of George Rogers Clark," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XI, 1924, 179.

troops. It cannot be said she neglected them ~~before~~ the latter part of 1781. Her help was slow and scant because of her won³² poverty and the consequent disorder of her government.

Further material pertaining to finances has no immediate interest in these pages. Enough has been said to enable us to give an appraisal of the services rendered to Clark by his friends, especially by Oliver Pollock, Francis Vigo, and the Reverend Pierre Gibault. The question to be discussed now is, which of these three zealous and devoted patriots is entitled to most credit?

If we consider their services in terms of money only, there is no difficulty in answering the question. All will agree that Oliver Pollock of New Orleans contributed by far more than the other two. He had most to give and he gave it. The well-known historian, James A. James, who has given us books of information about the Illinois country, told me recently that Oliver Pollock aided Clark more than any one else; that without his aid the venture would certainly have failed. Dr. James, of course, meant that Pollock contributed the greatest amount of money to sustain Clark and his troops in the Illinois country. We cannot dispute this fact. One historian informs us that "Pollock honored from his own private exchequer nearly every draft issued by Clark, to the extent of \$50,000 in specie within a period of nine months."³³

³² Ibid., 181.

³³ H.E. Hayden, op. cit., 415.

After the Revolution Clark had this to say about Pollock:

"...the service Mr. Pollock rendered upon all occasions in paying these bills I considered at the time, and now, to be one of the happy circumstances that enabled me to keep possession of that country."³⁴

The personal sacrifices of Pollock in meeting Clark's demands as well as similar ones on behalf of Virginia and of the United States have never been given adequate recognition. To most readers Pollock is probably unknown; many historians are silent about him.

Without wishing to detract in the least from the deserved honor due to Pollock, it must be remembered that the whole subject of western military accounts has been made confusing by the blundering of many commissions appointed at various times by Virginia and Congress. With best of intentions each of these succeeding commissions tangled the accounts.³⁵ Historians who have referred to them have been generally misled into gross errors. Thus Oliver Pollock's advancements to Clark have been many times multiplied by writers who supposed Pollock's advancements to Virginia and Congress were made to Clark, and assumed that Pollock paid bills drawn by Clark which in fact were never paid.³⁶

34 Ibid.,

35 Temple Bodley, George Rogers Clark, op. cit., 192.

36 Ibid.

Next after Pollock come Francis Vigo and Reverend Pierre Gibault, and it a difficult question to determine which of these two is entitled to the greater credit. Vigo furnished more money than Father Gibault, but he had more in his possession, and he was no doubt greatly influenced in his actions by Father Gibault.

Writers of Western history generally overrate Colonel Vigo's sacrifices. John Law, for instance, declares that the whole credit of Clark's conquest belongs to two men: "Gen. George Rogers Clark and Col. Francis Vigo."³⁷ This is absurd. No one familiar with the history of Clark's expedition would hesitate to give at least some credit to Father Gibault, to Oliver Pollock, and perhaps to Patrick Henry.

Colonel Francis Vigo, however, has rendered great financial aid to maintain Clark and his soldiers in the Illinois country. He requested the inhabitants, with whom he was well acquainted, to furnish Clark whatever was needed, and look to him for pay. Upon his credit large advances were made; for all of which he paid. He also out of his own stores, furnished a large amount on the orders of Clark. The aggregate of the amount thus advanced and paid by him, most of which was in cash, reached³⁸ nearly the sum of \$12,000.

To pay the advances thus made by Colonel Vigo, Clark drew

37 John Law, op. cit., 21.

38 House Report, op. cit., 2.

upon Pollock four bills of exchange, as follows: one for \$921; one for \$1,452; one for \$298; and the other for \$8,616. Pollock paid all these drafts excepting the one for \$8,616. This bill Vigo testified that he did not present to Pollock until 1779,³⁹ and at a time when the latter was out of funds.

In consideration of the public domain northwest of the Ohio River, the government of the United States undertook to pay the debts to which Virginia had been subjected in conquering the Illinois country. In 1835 Vigo's claim to \$8,616 was adjusted and paid with interest.

Statement

The State of Virginia

To Francis Vigo, Dr.

To advances made to General Clark for the use of the Illinois regiment, under the command of the said Clark.	\$8,616.00
To interest on the same at 5 per cent. per annum, from March 20, 1779 to January 10, 1835.....	24,038.85
Total	\$32,654.85

40

John H. Smith, commissioner.

There is no denying that Vigo's services were of incalculable benefit. His aid was given at a time when Clark was practically penniless and in great stress, for Pollock, the official agent, refused to extend further credit to the Americans. An historian of Vigo's nationality declares that "without Vigo

39 Ibid.

40 House Report, No. 216, op. cit., 6.

Clark would have remained an obscure frontier raider;" that "without Vigo it is very probable that the present states of Ohio...would to-day form part of Canada."⁴¹ The same writer admits that Father Gibault helped the American cause, but states that his role in Clark's success at Kaskaskia and Vincennes was not very important; that "the credit for the 'submission' of Post Vincennes , as it has been erroneously called, has been given to Father Gibault."⁴² Evidently, this author is not any too well informed on this particular historical event, for practically all writers, including Clark himself, credit Gibault for the "submission".

Vigo must have been a character of great distinction, renowned for his integrity, liberality and benevolence. John Badollet, Register of the Land Office of the United States at Vincennes, states that "from the very intimate knowledge he had of the character of Colonel Vigo, and that of his high sense of honor, that if the alternative were presented him of either receiving a large pecuniary recompense for the services and pecuniary aid he has rendered the American cause, or simply receiving a public acknowledgment of them by the government, though very poor, he believes Colonel Vigo would not hesitate a moment in choosing the latter."⁴³

41 Giovanni Schiavo, The Italians in America Before the Civil War, pub. under the auspices of the Italian Historical Society by the Vigo Press, Chicago, 1934, 180.

42 Ibid., 186.

43 House Report, op. cit., 46.

Let us see now what Father Gibault had to give. With a view of assisting Clark and benefitting the American cause, this priest sacrificed his entire private fortune of 7,800 French livres, equal to about \$1,560 of our money. He also disposed of all his cattle, and the tithes of his parishioners to sustain
 44
 Clark and his soldiers.

As to the part played by Father Gibault with respect to the finances of the new government, it may truthfully be said that his work could not be measured in dollars and cents. While his contribution was not very great in terms of money, yet, nevertheless, it was his all; and the spirit which actuated him and the influence he exercised would seem to entitle him to the fullest measure of credit and honor. He had championed the new government, recommended it to all his people and affectionately received their allegiance for it. He believed in it, and therefore, when the government was in financial straits, he, by word
 45
 and deed, did everything in his power to sustain it. However, one is forced to admit that it is very doubtful if Clark could have sustained himself in the Illinois country without the financial backing of Vigo and Pollock.

What was the reward of these distinguished men? Oliver Pollock upon whom the burden of Clark's expenses fell most

44 John Law, op. cit., 54.

45 Joseph J. Thompson, Illinois Catholic Historical Review, II, 1919, 79.

heavily, was obliged to give up his property, his very home, and live in poverty. He was thrown into a Spanish prison for not being able to make good engagements which he had made for the American government.⁴⁶ At length some of Pollock's New Orleans friends became his sureties and got him released.⁴⁷

In reply to his appeal for remittances to the secret committee of Congress, consisting of Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, and Richard Henry Lee, they wrote, July 19, 1779, that while they recognized his claims, his sacrifices, and his faithfulness to duty, they were unable to make good any promises.⁴⁸

Adjustments between Virginia and the United States having finally been made, Pollock's claim to the amount of \$108,605.00, was assumed and paid by the Federal government. His other accounts with Virginia were eventually paid by that State.⁴⁹ Amongst all the men who contributed in service or money to the winning of the west, Pollock is one of the very few who at last received some measure of justice from both Virginia and Congress; whereupon, being a man of remarkable commercial ability, he was able to restore his fortune and died in comfortable circumstances.⁵⁰

As for Vigo after having risked his life and sacrificed his goods for the benefit of the government, he was ruined and

46 Ibid., II, 1920, 206.

47 Temple Bodley, George Rogers Clark, 232.

48 James A. James, Ill. Hist. Collections, VIII, 1.

49 Ibid., 6.

50 Temple Bodley, George Rogers Clark, op. cit., 233.

bankrupted and died, childless, in abject poverty. Recently I had occasion to visit his grave at Vincennes. On the tombstone are the words: Francis Vigo, Patriot, whose devotion to the cause of American liberty made possible the capture of Ft. Sackville, Feb. 25, 1779. Born in Mondovi, Sardinia, 1740, died in Vincennes, 1836. Erected October 18, 1909 by the Francis Vigo chapter. D.A.R.---It is sad to relate that this benefactor of our country was never repaid for his generous services. Years later his heirs secured a judgment against the United States⁵¹ government for the payment of the debt due Francis Vigo.

Father Gibault, the most distinguished of the group, never received a particle of compensation from Virginia or the United States for his services and he never received one cent of repayment for money and goods actually furnished to the American⁵² troops.

The espousal of the American cause cost Father Gibault not only his little worldly possessions, but his ecclesiastical standing as well. He was disowned by the Canadian Bishop who espoused the British cause. This bishop wrote of him to the Prefect Apostolic Carroll, later Bishop and Archbishop, "...that⁵³ I propose to give him no employment for the future." Slanders spread by dissolute characters against him, so influenced Bishop Carroll that he denied Father Gibault his confidence. Gibault

51 House Report, No. 216, op. cit., 6.

52 John Law, op. cit., 127.

53 Illinois Historical Collections, V, 1909, 588.

left his adopted country and found welcome in the Spanish possession across the Mississippi where he dragged out an existence
 54
 of poverty.

After giving the above accounts due consideration, we see that it is but logical to give to many persons much credit for the gaining of the Illinois country. But the writer is of opinion that America owes more to Father Gibault than to any other person. Without his aid Clark would not have secured a footing in this region, and hence there would have been no need of a Pollock or a Vigo. It is important to remember that, next to the general planning and shrewdness displayed by Clark, that which most conspired to secure success was the war between England and France and the alliance of the latter with the United
 55
 States.

Connecting this thought with the fact that the Illinois country was settled by the French, and that Father Gibault was the most commanding personage, the central figure, the idol of the people there, and that General Clark was an entire stranger in the country, and could not be expected to have sufficient influence over a strange people speaking a different language from his own, we may in all fairness say that the merit of

54 Joseph J. Thompson, "A Chapter in Illinois' Finances," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, II, 1919, 80.

55 C.W. Butterfield, op. cit., 784.

success is primarily and principally due to Father Gibault. Any reference, therefore, to the heroes of early Illinois which does not include Father Pierre Gibault is incomplete.⁵⁶ It is not surprising then to read such statements as: "Father Gibault was the only one at the time who possessed the requisite knowledge and influence to make the expedition a success."⁵⁷ "Unless they French inhabitants could be enlisted in its favor, the expedition could not succeed."⁵⁸ "Clark and Gibault may be said to share the honor of securing this extensive territory to the United States."⁵⁹

56 James M. Graham, "Catholic Heroes of Illinois," in Illinois Catholic Historical Review, January, 1919, 298.

57 J.J. Thompson, "Letters and Documents," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, IV, 1921, 295.

58 Ibid.

59 Charles H. Metzger, "Sebastian Louis Meurin, S.J.," in Illinois Catholic Historical Review, IV, 1921, 43.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER GIBAULT'S LAST YEARS

Father Gibault's time between the surrender of Fort Sackville to Clark in 1779 and the close of the Revolutionary War in 1783 was occupied chiefly in the parish of the Immaculate Conception at Kaskaskia. In 1779 he visited Vincennes where he spent about a month, sometimes at the Post itself, but the greater part of the time along the headwaters of the Wabash among the Weas, Piankeshaws, Peorias, Miamies, and other tribes constituting the once famous League of the Wabash. The League had been the ally of England against France. Father Gibault succeeded in securing its allegiance to Clark and the Commonwealth of Virginia.¹

But the duties of this indefatigable missionary were too numerous for any one man. His active ministrations, as we have seen in the first chapter of this work, embraced all the old French forts and Indian missions, and his powers extended from Mackinac on the North to New Orleans on the South. And yet these extensive fields of labor exhibit but the time and space of his activity. They do not reveal the apostle; they do not

1 J.J. Conway, "The Beginnings of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, "Missouri Historical Society, No. 14, 1897, 26.

show what courage he possessed, how unselfish he was, and how unremitting he continues to be in the discharge of his arduous stewardship. He alone could say here what no other being but his God could know--what spirit animated all his life. He was² slandered and accused of giving scandal.

The cases in which men live a long and active life without being attacked and made the subject of criticism are rare indeed. Thus in 1780, the Bishop of Quebec ordered him to present himself³ and answer certain accusations that had been made against him.

The exact character of the accusation is not known, and it appears that the order was not pressed, for Father Gibault did not go to Quebec, though he made defense by letter in 1786 to the charges accumulated to date. In his letter of June 6, of that year, he gave the old and simple answer, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" ---putting it in these words:

To all the pains and hardships that I have undergone in my different journeys to most distant points, winter and summer, attending so many villages in Illinois distant from each other, in all weathers, night and day, snow or rain, storm or fog on the Mississippi, so that

- 2 Conway, 29; Rev. H. Alerding, History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes, Carlon and Hollenbeck, Indianapolis, 1883, 61.
- 3 Jacob P. Dunn, "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest," in Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 10, Springfield, 1906, 27.

I never slept four nights in a year in my own bed, never hesitating to start at a moment's notice, whether sick or well, how can a priest who sacrifices himself in this way, with no other view than God's glory, and the salvation of his neighbor, with no pecuniary reward, almost always ill-fed, unable to attend to both spiritual and temporal, how I say, can you know such a priest zealous to fulfil the duties of his holy ministry, careful to watch over his flock, instruct them in the most important tenets of religion, instruct the young unceasingly and untiringly not only in Christian doctrine but teaching the boys to read and write, as one who gives scandal, and is addicted to intoxication? ⁴

All the evidence existing confirms this statement of the priest, and indicates that these charges were utterly unfounded. His own letters bear testimony. In the same year, 1786, he wrote to Bishop Briand from Vincennes: "I should be well enough pleased with the people, were it not for the wretched liquor trade which I cannot eradicate, and which compels me to refuse the sacraments to several, for the Indians commit horrible disorders when in liquor." ⁵

From 1780 to 1790 the Illinois villages were left without provision for their government, and local conditions became almost unendurable on account of the resultant anarchy. Everybody was in poverty, which engendered theft and rapine.

4 John G. Shea, "Life of Archbishop Carroll," in History of the Catholic Church, II, 470, 471.

5 Ibid., 470.

Confusion and disorder reigned.

Despite the grievous privations and disappointments consequent upon the assumption of government by Virginia, Father Gibault remained steadfast and continued the spokesman and tribune of his people. In the midst of all his labors and difficulties, he wrote to Clark on May 10, 1780, from Kaskaskia: "I pray you to accept my respects and to employ me in any way that it may be in my power to serve you. It will always give me true pleasure to be useful to you...."⁷

For reasons of which no record has come down to us, Father Gibault in 1783 took up his residence at Ste. Genevieve on the western shore of the Mississippi River, where he continued to reside for the succeeding two years.⁸ From his letters we are to understand that the Spanish government offered him a good salary and other advantages. Still, Ste. Genevieve proved the beginning of the Canadian missionary's troubles. The Spanish commandant at Ste. Genevieve was a very good man in many respects, but seems to have been somewhat too free in the use of his tongue. He charged the priest with excessive drinking and keeping late

6 Clarence Walworth Alvord, "The Illinois Country 1673-1818," Illinois Centennial Commission, Springfield, Ill., 1920, I, 338.

7 The American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, pub. by the Society, XXI, 1910, 183.

8 J.J. Thompson, "Letters and Documents," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, IV, 1921, 291.

hours. Father Gibault, consequently, could no longer stay at this place. In 1785, he removed to Vincennes where he remained¹⁰ as resident pastor of St. Xavier's Church until 1789.

In the meantime, 1782, the Bishop of Quebec sent Father John F. Hubert as his Vicar-General in the West. His jurisdiction extended over the Illinois country, and he made attempts to meet the spiritual wants of the people from Vincennes to Kaskaskia; but the dangerous condition of the country prevented his accomplishing much, for he adhered to England, while the Reverend Gibault and the Catholics in the Illinois country had recognized the United States as their fellow believers had done in¹¹ the East.

In consequence of the severance of the civil ties between the American colonies and England, some readjustments of the administrative life of the Church in America¹² was made necessary. On June 9, 1784, therefore, the Holy See issued a decree organizing the Catholic Church in the United States as a distinct unit, over which Reverend John Carroll of Baltimore was placed as Prefect-Apostolic. Later, in 1789, Pope Pius VI ended this

9 Charles George Herbermann and Henry F. Herbermann, "Very Reverend Pierre Gibault, V.G.," Historical Records and Studies, pub. by the U.S. Cath. Hist. Soc., N.Y., 1913, VI, part 2, 141.

10 Conway, op. cit., 27.

11 Shea, op. cit., 183, 185.

12 F. Beuckman, "Civil and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction," Illinois Catholic Historical Review, I, July, 1918, 67.

temporary arrangement by naming Carroll the first Bishop of the
¹³
 United States.

For a short time after the establishment of the Prefecture Apostolic of the United States a confusion existed about the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Illinois because, through an oversight, no action was taken to change the former limits of
¹⁴
 the Diocese of Quebec. In 1785 the Prefect-Apostolic sent the discaled Carmelite, Father Paul de Saint Pierre, to the Illinois country to look after the spiritual wants of the people there. Shortly after, the Very Reverend John Carroll sent Father Pierre Huet de la Valiniere to act as his vicar-general in that region.
¹⁵
 Father Gibault came in conflict with both these missionaries, and objected to this seeming intrusion upon the territory of the Diocese of Quebec. He still considered himself the Vicar-General
¹⁶
 of Quebec and made many appeals to the bishop for recognition. That the Bishop of Quebec did not recall him to his own diocese was unquestionably due to Father Gibault's connection with the capture of Vincennes. This must have appeared to the Canadian Government as an act of hostility to Great Britain. The Very Reverend John Francis Hubert, who became Bishop of Quebec in
¹⁷
 1788 after his labors in the West, was therefore wise when he

13 Thomas F. Cleary, "Huet de la Valiniere," Mid-America, pub. by Loyola University, Chicago, April 1933, 213.

14 Peter Guilday, Life and Times of John Carroll, The Encyclopedia Press, N.Y., 1922, 202.

15 Herbermann, op. cit., 145.

16 Alvord, Illinois Historical Collections, V, 1909, 521.

17 Shea, 473.

declined to recall Gibault to Canada and was really acting for the best interests of the missionary.

In the meantime through the decade of disorder, religion suffered, although there are instances of at least some progress, particularly at Vincennes,¹⁸ and more notably at Cahokia.¹⁹ Kaskaskia, the once thriving center of Catholicity, suffered more than other French villages from the incoming Americans. Here men feared "neither God nor the law."²⁰

At Vincennes there was so much opposition to religion, that those who tried to sustain it were defied. So weak had the religious life of the people become, that as is frequent in frontier life, even the natural law was violated with impunity. Dissensions in the homes begot endless discord between parents and children. Father Gibault wrote a very long letter from Vincennes in 1786, in which he explained the disturbed state of society, where "there was no commandant, no troops, no prison, no hangman,"---in short--no semblance of sanction for law.

²¹
Violence of every sort prevailed.

Because of Father Gibault's open war on the conditions then obtaining, it was only natural that he should be the victim of the calumnies of those whom he sought to correct. His labors,

18 Gibault to Bishop of Quebec, June 6, 1786, Illinois Historical Collections, V, 534-548.

19 Cahokians to Seminary, June 6, 1787, IHC, V, 561-567.

20 De St. Pierre to Payet, February 18, 1786, IHC, V, 532.

21 Gibault to Bishop of Quebec, supra.

however, were not without fruit. An invitation at this time from the Cahokians asking Gibault to become their pastor, rallied the disaffected people of Vincennes about him; they resolved unanimously to build a church. Gibault received the bishop's approval and a comfortable church was constructed under the title of "St. Francis Xavier on the Wabash."²²

During the years of Gibault's administration at Vincennes as pastor, the village had the benefit of all religious services. Sermons were given on Sundays and feast-days. Twice a day there gathered around Father Gibault the class whose members he taught catechism, immediately after Mass and before sunset. In a very short time he taught the people a more thorough appreciation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The people had had no religious teaching for twenty-three years, except when Gibault or Payet happened to pass through there on their missionary journeys. Gibault's success gave him every reason to hope that he would eventually be able to expel barbarism from the post.²³

The change of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, however, was soon to affect Father Gibault. In consequence of his unwillingness to recognize the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authority of the United States, the Very Reverend John Carroll wrote the following to the Bishop of Quebec:

22 Jacob Platt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, the American Historical Society, Chicago, 1919, I, 134.

23 Illinois Historical Collections, V, 534-548.

...I appointed him Valiniere my Vicar-General there Illinois country. Since his departure I have received letters written at Post Vincennes by another priest named Gibault, who tells me that for nineteen years he himself has been in that section vicar-general of the bishops of Quebec. This is a point, my Lord, on which I need information, and as to which I venture to ask some light from your Lordship, especially as reports have reached me in regard to Mr. Gibault, very unfavorable as to his conduct....²⁴

Bishop Hubert of Quebec answered this letter under date of October 6, 1788, replying as follows:

...True it is that M. Gibault was nominated twenty years ago as vicar-general for the Illinois country; but since that time the episcopal see of Quebec has twice changed its incumbent without his faculties having been renewed. Complaints of different kinds, especially a suspicion of treason towards the government, caused my predecessors to entertain some antipathy towards him, so much so that I propose to give him no employment for the future. That would be easier for you to do....²⁵

It is to be noted that "a suspicion of treason" is the motive stressed by Hubert for not retaining Gibault--a reason that would in no way have prevented Carroll from giving him a position in the Diocese of Baltimore; but Carroll did not accept him. Thus was Gibault made to pay a penalty for his patriotism.

24 Joseph J. Thompson, "Illinois' First Citizen: Pierre Gibault," Illinois Catholic Hist. Review, VIII, 1925, 13.

25 Ibid., 15.

Turning our attention once more to the question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, we must assert that the conflict might have had serious consequences had not Carroll and Hubert proved themselves judicious, patient, and considerate.²⁶ When it was reported that the same territory was being served by both dioceses, there was an exchange of courteous letters between the bishop and the Prefect-Apostolic. Throughout the controversy both officials showed admirable tact. Rome finally decided the friendly difference between the two prelates in 1791. The Holy See foresaw that the government of the United States would not tolerate the exercise of the spiritual jurisdiction of Quebec in American territory and consequently assigned all the territory²⁷ of the United States to the jurisdiction of Baltimore.

As a result both of civil and ecclesiastical changes at Vincennes, Father Gibault no longer felt at home. The importance of the French had declined. A great number of the French inhabitants emigrated to the west side of the Mississippi as the American population in this town increased to about four hundred²⁸ souls. Crowds of strangers jostled the good priest carelessly in the streets, where once every face had worn a look of recognition. Strange priests were coming to usurp the little chapel.

26 Guilday, op. cit., 202.

27 Illinois Historical Collections, V, 595.

28 St. Clair Papers, Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati, 1882, II, 27.

Old age was coming on, and with it the desire for rest and
 29 quiet. After four years of pastorship here, Gibault had with-
 drawn in October, 1789, to Cahokia. Vincennes then was without
 30 a resident priest until the arrival of Benedict Elaget in 1792.
 Before departing, Gibault made provision for the faithful of Vin-
 cennes by naming a layman, Mr. Pierre Mallet, a guardian of the
 31 church until the arrival of his successor.

Congress at this time, in partial recognition of the aid of
 the early French settlers, passed laws confirming them in the
 title to their possessions; but it was provided that they should
 have the lands they occupied set off and surveyed at their own
 expense. The order of Congress, however, could not be carried
 out, because the people were not able to pay the surveyor.
 Father Gibault, in pathetic terms, invoked the aid of Arthur St.
 Clair, then governor and commander-in-chief of the territory
 northwest of the Ohio River, who understood conditions thorough-
 ly, for he saw the misery of the people on his visit to the
 French settlements in January, 1790.

Your Excellency is an eye witness of
 the poverty to which the inhabitants are

- 29 Pauline Lancaster Peyton, "Pierre Gibault, Priest and
 Patriot of the Northwest in the 18th Century," Records of the
 American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, pub.
 by the Society, 1901, XII, 494.
- 30 Gilbert J. Garraghan, Chapters in Frontier History, The
 Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, 1934, 21.
- 31 Thomas F. Cleary, op. cit., 225.

reduced, and of the total want of provisions to subsist on. Not knowing where to find a morsel of bread to nourish their families, by what means can they support the expense of a survey which has not been sought for on their parts, and for which it is conceived by them, there is no necessity. Loaded with misery and groaning under the weight of misfortunes accumulated since the Virginia troops entered their country, the unhappy inhabitants throw themselves under the protection of your Excellency, and take the liberty to solicit you to lay their deplorable situation before Congress.³²

This document was signed by Pierre Gibault and eighty-seven others. It demonstrates not only his continued popularity, but also his solicitude for the people with whom he had been so long and intimately associated. And in response to this appeal, the
33
Act of Congress was repealed.

Here at Cahokia Father Gibault himself was without means. Six weeks prior to his writing the foregoing letter, he forwarded to Governor St. Clair a petition for a grant of part of the Seminary Land at Cahokia, in compensation for losses sustained by him during the Revolutionary War. The following is part of the memorial from this excellent man, to Governor St. Clair, dated May 1, 1790. It is so true, so delicate, so modest.

32 St. Clair Papers, I, 165.

33 Statutes at Large of the United States of America, ed. by Richard Peters, pub. by Charles C. Little and James Brown, Boston, 1845, I, 222.

so unassuming, so free from self-laudation, so perfectly characteristic of this good father, that it deserves publication in connection with the facts above described, in reference to his services to the American Government.

The undersigned, has the honor to represent to your excellency, that from the moment of the conquest of the Illinois country, by Colonel George Rogers Clark (your memorialist) has not been backward in venturing his life on the many occasions in which he found that his presence was useful and at all times ~~sacrificing~~ his property which he gave for the support of the troops at the same price that he could have received the Spanish milled dollars, and for which, however, he has received only paper dollars of which he has had no information since he sent them, addressed to the Commissioner of Congress who required a statement of the depreciation of them at the Belle Riviere (Ohio River) in 1783, with an express promise in reply, that particular attention should be paid to his account, because it was well known to be in no wise exaggerated. In reality, he parted with his tithes and his beasts only to set an example to his parishioners...

The love of country and of liberty has also led your memorialist to reject all the advantages offered him by the Spanish government, and he endeavored by every means in his power...to retain every person in the dominion of the United States, in expectation of better times, giving them to understand that our lives and property having been employed twelve years in the aggrandizement and preservation of the United States, would at least receive an acknowledgment, and be compensated by the enlightened and upright ministers, who sooner or later would come to

examine into, and relieve us from our situation...He also hopes that his demand will be listened to favorably. It is this: The missionaries, like lords, have at all times possessed two tracts of land near this village; one three acres in front, which produces but little hay...the other of two acres in front, which may be cultivated with care, and propose to have a dwelling erected on it, with a yard and orchard, in case his claim is accepted....May it please your excellency then, to grant them to your memorialist as belonging to the domain of the United States, and give him a concession, to be enjoyed in full propriety in his private name, and not as missionary and priest, to pass it to his successor; otherwise, the memorialist will not accept it.

P. Gibault, Priest ³⁴

But St. Clair had no authority to make such a grant, and reported the request to Washington, saying: "I believe no injury would be done to anyone by his request being granted, but it was not for me to give away the lands of the United States." ³⁵

The concession was granted by Congress on March 3, 1791, although the United States had no title whatever to the land; Congress simply undertook the disposition of part of the Church property in Illinois. ³⁶

Bishop Carroll, on learning of this, entered his protest with the Government of the United States against this attempt to

³⁴ American State Papers, Public Lands, I, 21.

³⁵ Ibid., 14.

³⁶ H. Alerding, History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes, Carlon & Hollenbeck, Indianapolis, 1883, 64.

alienate Church property to an individual clergyman. Whether Bishop Carroll succeeded in securing a revocation of the **grant** by Congress, we are not advised, but of one thing we can speak with certitude, and that is that Father Gibault never received the land. Apparently in consequence, the Reverend Gibault left the diocese of Baltimore, and retired to the Spanish territory beyond the Mississippi.³⁷

However, before departing from the American side, he removed to Kaskaskia, where he lived for about a year. In 1792 he crossed into the Spanish territory, and located at New Madrid, in the southern part of the State of Missouri. Towards the close of 1792, he traveled south to Arkansas Post, where he received James Dorst, his wife and six children into the church.³⁸ In February, 1793, he returned to New Madrid, and in July of that year was appointed pastor of St. Isidore's Church.³⁹ He was under the immediate spiritual jurisdiction of Reverend James Maxwell, of Ste. Genevieve, Vicar-General of Upper Louisiana. While he was pastor, Father Gibault built a church in New Madrid, securing from Morales, in 1799, the necessary funds for that purpose. From the time he took up his residence in New Madrid until his death he was active in all spiritual matters, and as a

37 J.G. Shea, II, 472.

38 F. G. Holweck, "The Arkansas Mission under Rosati," in the St. Louis Catholic Historical Review, pub. by the Catholic Historical Society of St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo., 1919, I, 252.

39 John Rothensteiner, "Historical Sketch of Catholic New Madrid," St. Louis Catholic Historical Review, 1922, IV, 119.

priest of the parish he received a regular salary of \$600 from
⁴⁰
 the government.

If the career of this distinguished priest is but poorly traced in the available records during the period of his labors in the Illinois country, it is infinitely more obscure from the time he removed to the Spanish or Missouri side. Unfortunately the old parish records of New Madrid were destroyed by fire during the Civil War. Even the time and place of his death is unknown; However, most writers assert that he died in New Madrid, in the year 1804, and was buried in the cemetery of St. Isidore's Church. As the result of an earthquake on February 10, 1911, the cemetery was shattered and swallowed up by the
⁴¹
 waters of the Mississippi.

A word about the late recognition of the work of Father Gibault is necessary to complete our discussion. No longer will historians use Mr. English's statement: "As far as the author is advised, no county, town or post office bears his name; no monument has been erected to his memory, and no headstone marks his
⁴²
 grave...." It is gratifying to all familiar with the history of the conquest of the Northwest, and with the facts concerning

40 Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., St. Louis, 1908, II, 303.

41 Garraghan, 21; Conway, 27; Herbermann, 148; Dunn, Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, X, 32.

42 William Hayden English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio, 1778-1783 and Life of General George Rogers Clark, The Bowen-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, Ind., 1896, 190.

the invaluable service rendered at that time to George Rogers Clark and to the nation by Father Gibault, that a statue of this "patriot-priest" was erected at Vincennes, Indiana. The statue, which is life size, is the work of Herman A. Mac Neil, the sculptor of the George Rogers Clark Memorial. It is placed on that part of the Memorial grounds known as Gibault Plaza, just opposite the old Catholic Church. This plaza was dedicated to the memory of Father Pierre Gibault by Honorable Clem Richards, chairman of the George Rogers Clark commission, on May 6, 1934, on the occasion of the solemn observance of the diocesan centennial in Vincennes. The location is certainly very appropriate, for the Catholic Church occupies the site where St. Xavier's, Gibault's church, formerly stood.

Thus has our great and powerful nation finally paid fitting tribute to one who shared in all the perils and honors of that glorious campaign which ended in the capture of Vincennes and the surrender of Hamilton, an event more important in its consequences than any other occurring during our revolutionary struggle. It is on the basis of the historical reality of this role which he played that he has acquired national fame as the so-called "patriot-priest."

CRITICAL ESSAY ON AUTHORITIES

Sources

Source material on this subject may be found in the publications of the various historical societies and state records. The general index to Collections, Journals, and Publications of the Illinois State Historical Library and Society, compiled by Juliet G. Sager (1899-1928), is very serviceable. Of great value are the Illinois Historical Collections, Vols. I, V, VIII, XVI. Vol. I (1903), edited by Hiram W. Beckwith, contains Clark's Conquest of the Illinois; Vol. V (1909), edited by Clarence W. Alvord, contains the Kaskaskia Records 1778-1790 and Ecclesiastical Letters 1780-1792; Vol. VIII (1912), edited by James A. James, contains George Rogers Clark's Papers 1771-1781; and Vol. XVI (1921), edited by Alvord and Carter, contains the early letters of Gibault and Briand. Edward Gay Mason, Illinois in the 18th Century, is particularly helpful in the study of Kaskaskia and its parish records. These records too are found in Magazine of American History, VI, published by the Chicago Historical Society, (1881). Chicago Historical Collections, IV (1890), edited by E. G. Mason, is serviceable for documentary material on early Chicago and Illinois; Rocheblave Papers are printed in this volume. An important letter of Rocheblave, shedding considerable light on conditions at Kaskaskia, is also

found in Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, IX (1917), edited by Jessie Palmer Weber. The Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, Vols. XII (1901), XVIII (1907), XX (1909), contain a prize essay on Father Gibault by Miss Peyton, much information on the change of diocese of Quebec and Baltimore, and letters from the Archdiocesan Archives at Quebec 1768-1788, respectively. Some of Gibault's letters to his bishop are printed in the American Historical Review for April 1909, published by C.W. Alvord. The American Historical Review, I (1895), has copies of the original intercepted letters of Clark (1778-1779); the originals are kept in the Canadian Archives. Colonel George Rogers Clark's sketch of his Campaign in the Illinois in 1778-1779, (1869), contains Clark's letter to George Mason, November 19, 1779; it is one of Clark's excellent Ohio Valley Historical Series. Clark's letter to Mason is more accurate than his memoir. It is given with the most familiar frankness and with the greatest spirit. His Memoir was written some thirty years after the events occurred and contains some serious errors. Captain Bowman's Journal too is found in the Campaign in the Illinois, but nowhere refers to the work of Father Gibault. The original MS. of this Journal is much effaced, and in some places illegible; it is in the possession of the Kentucky Historical Society. Exceptionally rich in information is the vast collection of Haldimand Papers (Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Canada, 1778-1784) The

originals are in the British Museum, London, although the Archives of Canada, Ottawa, has had transcripts made of the entire collection and has calendared the material in the Reports (1884-1889), Douglas Brymner, archivist. The Haldimand letters used in this work are printed in the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, IX, XIX, and XX. Printed copies of the same material may be found in the Collections of the State Historical Society in Wisconsin, chiefly in volumes XI (1888) and XVIII (1908), both edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. The Publications of the Indiana Historical Society, Vols. II (1895) and VII (1919) are very useful. The Indiana Historical Bureau, No. 11 (1929), gives a brief history of early Indiana. The story of the French frontier in Illinois rests upon the Jesuit Relations, edited by R.G. Thwaites (Cleveland, 1896-1901), 73 volumes; Vol. LXX (1900) gives a treatment of all the missions (1747-1764), and Vol. LXXI (1901) tells of the travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France (1610-1791†). The Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, edited by John R. Brodhead, were of little use. Vols. V (1855) and IX (1855) contain London and Paris documents respectively. Bred. J. Turner, George Rogers Clark and the Kaskaskia Campaign 1777-78, is replete with documentary evidence. The same may be said of The Capture of Old Vincennes, by Milo M. Quaife, (1927), an original narrative of George Rogers Clark and of his opponent Governor Henry Hamilton. Particularly useful are the

Journals of the Continental Congress, Vols. IV (1906), V (1906), and XI (1908), edited from the original records in the Library of Congress by Worthington Chauncey Ford. Of the House Reports of Committees, Vol. II has the Report No. 216 of the 30th Congress, 1st Session, (1847-48), which deals with Colonel Francis Vigo and the American Government. Of the Statutes at Large of the United States of America, edited by Richard Peters, Vol. I (1845) has to do with the land question. The American State Papers, Public Lands, I-III (1832) and The St. Clair Papers arranged and annotated by William H. Smith, I-II (1882), are very valuable for source material on this subject. There are a quantity of documents in the Virginia Archives, Richmond. E.G. Swem, Librarian of the College of William and Mary, simplified the gathering of material on Virginia history by compiling the Virginia History Index, in two volumes, Roanoke, Va. (1934). The letters of Patrick Henry are published in Vol. I of the Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia, edited by H. R. McIlwaine, Richmond (1926). Of paramount value are the Statutes at Large of the State of Virginia, by William Waller Hening, Richmond. These are a collection of all the Laws of Virginia in thirteen volumes. Vol. XI (1823) deals with land granted to Clark and some of his men. Many volumes of the American Catholic Historical Researches, particularly Vols. II, V, and VI, give brief accounts of Father Gibault based on documentary sources. The Archives of the Old Cathedral at Vincennes

preserve church records dating from 1749. The Chicago Historical Society has the original Manuscript of Father Gibault's passport to the Illinois Country.

Monographs

Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 10 (1906), contains a lengthy and notable address by Jacob Piatt Dunn: "Father Gibault: The Patriot Priest of the Northwest." Pauline Lancaster Peyton's essay "Pierre Gibault, Priest and Patriot of the Northwest in the 18th Century," in Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, XII (1901) is another work of great merit. "Very Rev. Pierre Gibault, V.G." by Charles George Herbermann and Henry F. Herbermann, in Historical Records and Studies, Vol. VI, part 2, (1913), gives a very good account of the priest's activities. The spirit of the missionary is best seen in "The Beginnings of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, 1764-1776," by Reverend J.J. Conway, S.J., published by the Missouri Historical Society, No. 14 (1897). Very reliable are Joseph J. Thompson's articles on Father Gibault. His "Penalties of Patriotism" is found in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, IX (1917). It is an appreciation of the life, patriotism, and services of Francis Vigo, Pierre Gibault, George Rogers Clark, and Arthur St. Clair, whom the author styles "The Founders of the Northwest." His other articles appear in various numbers

of the Illinois Catholic Historical Review. Those that proved most serviceable are: "Illinois' First Citizen--Pierre Gibault," I (1918-1919), IV (1921), V (1922), and VIII (1925); "A Chapter in Illinois' Finances," II (1919); "The French in Illinois," II (1919); "The Illinois Missions," I (1918-1919); "The Catholic Clergy in Illinois," VII (1924). Abbe Lionel St. George Lindsay, for long years Archivist of the Archdiocese of Quebec, gathered together (1909) a number of letters and documents deposited in the Archdiocesan Archives at Quebec. These letters are presented by Thompson in the Illinois Catholic Historical Review, IV (1921). A number of other articles pertaining to our subject are published in different volumes of this excellent periodical.

"Oliver Pollock, Patriot and Financier," II (1920) by Margaret B. Downing; "Sebastian Louis Meurin, S.J." IV (1921) by Charles H. Metzger, S.J.; "Catholic Heroes of Illinois," I (1918-1919) by James M. Graham; "Civil and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction," I (1918-1919) by Reverend Fred. Beuckman; "Colonel Francis Vigo and George Rogers Clark," X (1927) by Cecil H. Chamberlain, S.J. "The Arkansas Mission under Rosati," by Reverend F.G. Holweck, in St. Louis Catholic Historical Review, I (1919), and "Historical Sketch of Catholic New Madrid," by Reverend John Rothensteiner, IV (1922), are very helpful in the understanding of Father Gibault's last years. The Reverend Thomas F. Clearly, Ph. D. is making researches in the history of the Catholic Church in Illinois during the post-revolutionary period 1783-1790. His article "Huet de la Valiniere," appears in Mid-America

of April 1933. A work that is regarded as a valuable document is Clarence W. Alvord's "Father Pierre Gibault and the Submission of Post Vincennes, 1778" in the American Historical Review, XIV (1909). Alvord also wrote "The Illinois Country 1673-1818" in Illinois Centennial Commission, I (Springfield, 1920). Many valuable articles may be found also in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review. In Vol. IV (1918) we find "Spanish Influence in the West during the American Revolution" by James A. James; in Vol. VIII (1921) "George Rogers Clark's Services of Supply" by James G. Randall; in Vol. XI (1924) "The National Significance of George Rogers Clark" by Temple Bodley. Three subjects that appear in Magazine of American History are treated in a scholarly manner: "Virginia's Conquest: The North-Western Territory" XVI (1886) by J.C. Wells; "Indiana's First Settlement; Clark's Important Conquest of Post Vincennes" XXI (1889) by E.A. Bryan; and "Oliver Pollock, His Connection with the Conquest of Illinois, 1778" XXII (1889) by Horace Edwin Hayden. Considerable information relative to the early history of Vincennes is contained in "Vincennes, One of the Oldest Towns of the West" by Ezra Mattingly, in Magazine of Western History, XII (1890). An article "Colonel Francis Vigo," by A.B. McKee, is in the Indiana Magazine of History, XIX (1923). Bessie Taul Conkwright's "Captain Leonard Helm," is found in the Indiana History Bulletin, X (1933). A very interesting account of the "Cathedral of Old Vincennes," by Francis Marion Van Natter, is in the National

Republic of April, 1933. Much stress is placed on the social conditions of the early settlements in "Illinois During the Revolution" by Mrs. Laura Dayton Fessenden, in Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, VI (1901). The address given before the Vincennes Historical And Antiquarian Society on February 22, 1839, by Judge John Law, is in his book The Colonial History of Vincennes, (1858). This is an excellent little book, but the writer puts altogether too much confidence in mere tradition. The address is also printed in The Virginia History Register and Literary Companion, VI (1853).

General

Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West (6 vols.) covering the years 1763-1807, is of great value to the general reader. It is written with engaging vigor and color, but it is not wholly accurate. In Vol. II the student finds a well-written story of Clark's expedition told from sources. William H. English, Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio, 2 vols. (1896), is a good history of Clark's work, with a vast amount of detail and many documents and facsimiles. The writer has utilized all available material to the utmost advantage. Consul W. Butterfield, History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns 1778 and 1779 (1904), is a work of research very valuable in correcting false legends. The source matter is handled with good judgment. The book has an

appendix containing 143 notes in the form of discussions, showing errors made by other authors. Mann Butler, A History of Kentucky (1834), is very accurate and painstaking; the original information was gotten from men who had taken part in the expedition. The book, however, is without an index. John Brown Dillon, A History of Indiana (1859), has much original matter concerning Clark's conquest, but practically nothing about Father Gibault. Clark's Memoir is used extensively by these two noted historians, Butler and Dillon. The most serviceable account of Father Gibault's missionary labors is that of John Gilmary Shea in his History of the Catholic Church in the United States, 1763-1815, in Vol. II of the four volumes, (1888). His Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States 1529-1854 (1883), is a very good book but not used in this thesis. In the two volumes of The Life and Times of John Carroll (1922) by Peter Guilday, are found materials for the settlement of the conflict of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Illinois Country. J.H. Schlarman, From Quebec to New Orleans (1929) is very useful. James A. James, The Life of George Rogers Clark (1928), is very reliable for the study of George Rogers Clark's conquest of the Illinois Country. Temple Bodley, George Rogers Clark: His Life and Public Services (1926), is a very careful study. It is thoroughly annotated and references are given for each statement. It records the prominent part played by the French Catholics. Clark's appreciation of the assistance rendered him by Father

Gibault is indicated. James Baldwin, The Conquest of the Old Northwest (1901) is too general, and lacks footnotes. Henry S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702-1901 (1902), is pro-Catholic. Jacob Piatt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, 2 volumes (1919), gives the fullest and in many respects the most satisfactory presentation of early Indiana history. It is to be especially commended for its abundant citation of authority. Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the Northwestern Territory (1847), is a collection of authentic, detached facts; has no index, but a very detailed table of contents. Gilbert J. Garraghan, Chapters in Frontier History (1934), is a research study in the making of the West, brief but scholarly. Bruno Roselli, Vigo: A Forgotten Builder of the American Republic (1933), is but a eulogy. The book is not annotated. Giovanni Schiavo, The Italians in America Before the Civil War (1934), is more reliable; the chapter-for-chapter bibliography in the rear is exceptionally good. Chapter XI of this book treats of Vigo. Logan Esarey, History of Indiana from its Exploration to 1922, 3 volumes, (1922), is a detailed work of merit. A short section of Chapter I treats of Gibault and the capture of Vincennes. True historical insight appears through all the pages of Virginia, A History of the People (1887), by John E. Cooke. The book is well annotated, has a good index and table of contents. John Reynolds, The Pioneer History of Illinois, second edition (1887), gives a true picture of early

Illinois. The writer was the fourth governor of Illinois (1830-1834), born in Pennsylvania and migrated west reaching Kaskaskia in 1800. Firmin A. Rozier, History of the Early Settlement of the Mississippi Valley (1890), is brief and direct in treating the American conquests. Alexander S. Withers, Chronicles of Border Warfare, (1831), is authentic. William M. Cockrum, A Pioneer History of Indiana (1907), is very interestingly written. The author spent fifty years gathering data for this work; much he got from personal acquaintance with the pioneers. He quotes but few authorities, and is not any too accurate, especially with dates. Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, (1908), is very valuable. The three volumes deal with the earliest explorations and settlements until the admission of the state into the Union. The work is well annotated. Arthur B. Hulbert, Pilots of the Republic (1906), has good material, but no footnotes. Chapter VI on George Rogers Clark is biographical; Gibault is not mentioned. Other works that should be mentioned, but which served only to a minor degree, are: George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois (1929) by Theodore C. Pease and Marguerite J. Pease; History of Illinois (1844) by Henry Brown; Illinois (1917) by Grace Humphrey; History of the Discovery and Settlement of the Valley of the Mississippi until 1846 (2 volumes) (1848) by John W. Monette; History of the United States of America, Vol. V (1888) by George Bancroft; The Westward Movement (1897) and Narrative and Critical History of

America, Vol. VI (1888) by Justin Winsor; History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes (1883) by the Reverend H. Alerding; Catholics and the American Revolution, two volumes, (1909) by Martin I.J. Griffin; The Life of George Mason 1725-1792, two volumes, (1892) by Kate Mason Rowland; "The American Revolution 1776-1783" by Claude H. Van Tyne, in Vol. IX of The American Nation series (27 volumes), edited by Albert Bushnell Hart (1905); Annals of the West (1850), first edition compiled by James H. Perkins and second edition revised and enlarged by John M. Peck; Recollections of Persons and Places in the West (1834) by H.M. Brackenridge.

The thesis "Reverend Pierre Gibault and the Old Northwest," written by Leo. G. Drexler, S.M., has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Paul Kiniery, Ph.D.

May 17, 1936

Rev. Joseph Roubik, S.J.

May 25, 1936